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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a personal growth support group on the personal effectiveness (or "self-efficacy") of a small group of returning female community college students. Those who participated in the study were women over the age of 25 who were attending college for the first time or were returning to college after a break to marry, raise a family, or work. Students were members of one of three groups: (1) an experimental group, consisting of five women who participated in an eight-week personal growth support group; (2) another experimental group, this one made up of nine women who were members of a 16-week psychology class taught by a community college counselor; and (3) the control group, consisting of three women from two other 16-week psychology classes taught by a full-time psychology faculty member. Group members completed three instruments each week that measured self-efficacy and anxiety symptoms. Interviews, questionnaires, and observations were also employed. None of the data from the instruments showed a statistically significant improvement in self-efficacy over the period of eight weeks. However, the quantitative data showed slight improvements in most incidences and did support the use of a personal growth support group as a means of improving self-efficacy for the women in the first experimental group. Research instrument is appended. (Contains 40 references.) (Author/EMH)

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ED 466 837

EXCITED AND SCARED: CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT A PERSONAL GROWTH SUPPORT GROUP HAS ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RETURNING WOMEN STUDENTS

by

C. Darlene VanEvery

A Doctoral Project
Submitted to the Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Arts
in Community College Education

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Excited and Scared: Case Study of the Impact a Personal Growth Support Group Has on the Self-Efficacy of Community College Returning Women Students

A doctoral project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Arts in Community College Education at George Mason University

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Spring Semester 1999
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DEDICATION

This doctoral project is dedicated to my late parents, Roy and Dorothy Uber. Like most parents they wanted more for their children than what they had, a better, easier life and more education. But what they lacked in the material was balanced out with the richness of the emotional. They taught me, by example, to be there for my family and friends, take pride in my work, and enjoy what life has to offer. Even though I was a source of great worry and concern over the years, they loved me, were proud of me and proud of what I have accomplished. For this legacy of love, support and encouragement I am deeply grateful. I pray that I will be able to pass on this legacy to my son Christopher and he to his children so that my parents will live on through those who come after.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with many things in life, this doctoral project is a result of a massive team effort. The assistance, patience, support, encouragement, knowledge, advice and hand-holding from so many people were instrumental in the completion of this document. I want to acknowledge and thank all of them from the bottom of my heart. My team includes my project committee, family, friends, co-workers at George Mason University, instructors, students, and counseling staff at Northern Virginia Community College. I am very grateful to Mary Voss and Marjorie Kinnaman for the students and space needed to conduct the group sessions. All of my doctoral project committee members were key to the realization of this document and each has my sincere thanks but one has seen me through the entire degree process and deserves to be singled out. Dr. Gilbert Coleman's knowledge, leadership, professionalism, and genuine concern for each student highlight him as the consummate academic professional. I thank him for all that he has done and bless the day he came into my life. I thank Dr. R.W. Lent for his permission to adapt his Self-Efficacy for Broad Milestones Scale. Finally, I would like to thank a group of women without whom this project would have never happened, the women who volunteered to participate in this project. I thank you for your trust, your willingness to share, your support of what I was trying to accomplish, and for all you have taught me. You are beautiful, intelligent, strong and full of love and my wish for you all is the realization of any and all dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

List of Tables vii
List of Figures viii
Abstract ix

Chapter I - Introduction 1
Statement of the Problem 2
Research Questions 4
Rationale 4
Definitions 5

Chapter II - Review of the Literature 7
Project Setting: The Community College 7
Project Population: Returning Women Students 8
Project Format: Group Counseling/Peer Support 10
Project Theory: Self-Efficacy 11

Chapter III – Methodology 14
Overview 14
Program Description 16
Population 17
Research Design 18
Data Collected 18
Interviews 18
Instruments 20
Questionnaire 21
Evaluations 22
Observations 22
Data Analysis 23
Qualitative Methods/Case Study Methods 23
Computer Programs 24
Research Issues 25

Chapter IV - Results 27
Interviews 28
Instruments 34
Academic Self-Efficacy Scale 34
General Self-Efficacy Scale 38
Beck's Anxiety Inventory 41

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire 45
Questionnaire 48
Evaluations 51
Observations 52

Chapter V - Summary, Implications and Recommendations 93
Summary 93
Implications 95
Recommendations 98

References 101

Appendixes 105
Appendix A: Academic Self-Efficacy Scale 105
Appendix B: General Self-Efficacy Scale 107
Appendix C: Beck's Anxiety Inventory 110
Appendix D: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire 112
Appendix E: Participant Questionnaire 115
Appendix F: Group Reaction Form 117
Appendix G: Personal Group Evaluation 119
Appendix H: Session 1 121
Appendix I: Session 2 123
Appendix J: Session 3 125
Appendix K: Session 4 127
Appendix L: Session 5 129
Appendix M: Session 6 131
Appendix N: Session 7 133
Appendix O: Session 8 135
Appendix P: Interview Questions 137
Appendix Q: Group Norms and Risks 139
Appendix R: Proposed Group Guidelines 141
Appendix S: Statement of Informed Consent 143
Appendix T: Follow-up Interview Questionnaire 145

Curriculum Vitae 147

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Analysis of Variance for Academic Self-Efficacy Scale 36
2. Mean Academic Self-Efficacy Scale Scores 36
3. Analysis of Variance for General Self-Efficacy Scale 39
4. Mean General Self-Efficacy Scale Scores 39
5. Analysis of Variance for the Beck's Anxiety Inventory 42
6. Mean Beck's Anxiety Inventory Scores 43
7. Mean Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Scores 47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Academic Self-Efficacy Mean Results	37
2.	General Self-Efficacy Mean Results	40
3.	Beck's Anxiety Inventory Mean Results	44

ABSTRACT

EXCITED AND SCARED: CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT A PERSONAL GROWTH SUPPORT GROUP HAS ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RETURNING WOMEN STUDENTS

C. Darlene VanEvery, D.A.C.C.

George Mason University, 1999

Doctoral Project Chairperson: Dr. Gilbert I. Coleman

Women are starting or returning to college in record numbers. Since many of these women do not have college degrees, they are taking advantage of the open enrollment and reasonable cost of the community college. Many of these "non-traditional" students are likely to experience stress and anxiety resulting from role conflicts, lack of confidence in academic skills, and/or fear that they will be unable to accomplish the work required by the instructors. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a personal growth support group on the self-efficacy of a small group of returning female community college students.

The students who participated in this study were women over the age of twenty-five who were attending college for the first time or were returning to college after a break to marry, raise a family, or work, etc. Students were members of one of three groups. The #1 Experimental Group was made up of five women who participated in the personal

growth support group. The nine women in the #2 Experimental Group were members of an sixteen week psychology class taught by a community college counselor. The #3 Control Group consisted of three women from two other sixteen week psychology classes taught by a full time psychology faculty member. The women in Group #1 participated in the personal growth support group for eight weeks. Group members completed three instruments each week which measured self-efficacy and anxiety symptoms. The women in Groups #2 and #3 completed these three instruments in a pre-test, post-test design. In addition, members from all three groups completed a college adaptation questionnaire in a pre-test, post-test design.

The researcher also collected data from the #1 Group using interviews, questionnaires, evaluations, and observations. The analysis of these data were compared to the quantitative data collected from the four instruments. None of the data from the instruments showed a statistically significant improvement in self-efficacy over the period of the eight weeks. However, the quantitative data did show slight improvements in most incidences, but these improvements were not statistically significant. The qualitative data did support the use of a personal growth support group as a means of improving self-efficacy for the women in the #1 Experimental Group.

Chapter I

Introduction

"A sobering thought: what if, right at this very moment, I am living up to my full potential?"-Jane Wagner

"Many women today feel a sadness we cannot name. Though we accomplish much of what we set out to do, we sense that something is missing in our lives and fruitlessly search 'out there' for the answers. What's often wrong is that we are disconnected from an authentic sense of self."-Emily Hancock

"Can I be living up to my full potential and still feel sad?" "Is living up to my potential a personal judgment or someone else's?" "Is something missing from my life?" Many women are asking themselves these questions and many more. Women are socialized to be the primary caretakers of relationships (Miller, as cited in McManus, Redford, Hughes, 1997). In the process of caring for relationships, women often put their own needs second to those of others and thereby lose connection with themselves (McManus et al). As a result, many women lose their sense of individuality and develop the belief that they cannot be successful in their own right. This negative belief affects the thoughts, feelings, and actions of these women. When women decide to return to or start to go to college, these negative beliefs impact upon the thoughts women have about their "right" to be in school and their chance for academic success. Community college counselors and instructors often see the results of this negative belief system as they come in contact with these students each semester.

The perceived inadequacies of returning women students may affect their behavior in the classroom. Affected behaviors may include the following: (1) being less likely to join in class discussions for fear of revealing a lack of information or ability, (2) projecting a passiveness which requires instructors to use examinations to determine knowledge and comprehension, (3) exhibiting test anxiety or even test terror because of their belief in their "inability", (4) failing the class. How can these students overcome the stress and anxiety they have built within themselves? What can counselors and instructors do to help students like this be successful at the community college? What can these students do to decrease their negative beliefs?

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to address the issue of improving the self-efficacy of returning women community college students. For the purposes of this project, returning women were those over the age of 25 who were attending college for the first time or were returning to college after a break to marry, raise a family, work, etc. Returning women students account for 58% (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 1995) of the student population in community colleges nationwide. Community college counseling centers provide programs to meet the needs of and provide services to a broad student population. However, the researcher felt that a program developed specifically for returning women was needed to support and meet the needs of this large population. This project examines a program intended to provide this population with a means to improve self-efficacy through a personal growth support group format. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy

is defined as the confidence a woman has in her ability to be successful at some task. This will be measured by self-report instruments.

Each potential group member was interviewed to determine compatibility of group goals, as identified by the researcher, with the woman's goal/reason for joining the group. These members were students who responded to the publicity about the group or who were referred by counselors in the community college. Group membership was voluntary. There were to be no more than 10 women selected to be group members in the first Experimental Group (#1). However, only five women were willing and able to participate in the #1 Experimental Group.

A second Experimental Group (#2) of women was selected from a psychology class conducted by a community college counselor. A Control Group (#3) of women was selected from two other psychology classes. The #2 and #3 Group members were women over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate and were willing to complete the four measurements - once at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. A "session plan" was used to outline each of the eight sessions attended by the #1 Experimental Group. Each plan listed objectives and procedures for each session. Experimental Group #1 members were given three measurements during each of the eight sessions: (1) a General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993; Woodruff & Cashman, 1993), (2) an adaptation of Lent's Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Lent, 1997), and (3) the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988)(see Appendixes A - C). In addition, during the first and eighth sessions, members of the #1 Experimental Group were also given the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1986)(see Appendix D). The #2

Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group were given the same four measurements, once at the beginning of the sixteen week semester and again at the end of the semester. These four measurements provided data used to run a pre-test, post-test, three-group design among the two experimental groups (#1 and #2) and the #3 Control Group as well as a single-subject design within the #1 Experimental Group.

Research Questions

Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data?

Question 2: Which group experiences/topics were reported to be the most and least beneficial to the returning women students in the #1 Experimental Group?

Question 3: Did the pre-test/post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group?

Question 4: Did the analysis of the data, collected from the instruments used in the study, support the analysis of qualitative data collected from Group #1 members on levels of academic and general self-efficacy?

Rationale

The outcome of this project is a structured program designed specifically for facilitating a personal growth support group in the community college for returning women students. The program provides topics, procedures, and activities to be covered during eight one hour forty-five minute group sessions. The purpose of the eight sessions is to assist the group members in accomplishing the following: (1) to become more self-aware, (2) to clarify

educational and personal goals, (3) to change thinking from negative to more positive patterns, (4) to understand the concepts of personal power and self-care, (5) to improve communication skills, (6) to learn how these ideas/skills can be applied in the future. The members of the peer group share experiences, are a support system for each other, and ultimately, improve each group member's self-efficacy.

The support provided by group counseling has been shown to be beneficial for women facing the challenges experienced when returning to school (Bers, 1983; McManus et al., 1997). While there is research on several combinations of returning women students, - mid-life women, mature women, women community college students, group counseling for women, support groups for women, and self-efficacy for women, -there is little research on the combination I have chosen. I believe that my combination of a personal growth support group with group counseling for community college returning women students is needed at all community colleges to provide a special population with tools that will help them be successful in school and out.

Definitions

The following definitions were used in this study:

returning women students: female community college students 25 years or older returning to, or just starting college.

self-efficacy: "Beliefs about one's own ability to successfully perform a given behavior" (Bandura, 1997a).

academic self-efficacy: confidence in one's ability to be successful in community college course work.

general self-efficacy: confidence in one's ability to be successful in completing various actions/challenges.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Project Setting: The Community College

Community/Junior colleges have been in existence since 1901. Walter Crosby Eells in 1931 credited junior colleges for increasing accessibility to higher education in his book *The Junior College*. However, it was the passage of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, also known as the GI Bill, in 1944 that gave the greatest boost to enrollments throughout higher education, including the community college. President Truman wanted to ensure that higher education played a role in preserving and enhancing the democratic ideals, including social and economic justice, for which we had fought so hard during World War II. He appointed a Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy. The report prepared by this commission became known as the "Truman Commission Report" and this report gave the community college system its mission. The report of this commission stated:

> Community colleges should charge little or no tuition; serve as cultural centers for the community; offer continuing education for adults, in addition to technical and general education, which meets the needs of the local community; be locally controlled; emphasize civic responsibility; and be part of the state's and nation's system of higher education. (President's Commission on Higher Education (1947), Higher Education for American Democracy. Organizing Higher Education. (Vol. 3) as cited in Vaught (1992).

The report cemented the role, scope, image, and mission of the community college. The Higher Education Act of 1965 and amendments in 1972 and 1992 have made it possible for Americans to attend college, many choosing the community college. Today's two-year community colleges provide a myriad of programs that cover areas demanded by their communities. These include the following: occupational-technical education, college transfer education, general education, developmental education, training for business and government, continuing education, community services, work experience, and special training. Community colleges provide open access and ease of enrollment on a part-time basis at low cost. All of these are important considerations in today's busy world. Community college students comprised 39 percent of those in higher education or approximately 5.7 million students in 1992. The classification by age indicated that 32 percent were 21 years or younger, 24 percent were between 22-39 years old, 31 percent were 30 years or older. Twelve percent were not designated by age. Women made up 58 percent of the community college enrollment in 1992 (AACC 1995).

Project Population: Returning Women Students

Women students have a significant impact on higher education due to the high percentage of women attending. While the age range of women attending community colleges is from the teens to 80 plus years old, the target population for this study was women 25 years of age and older. The researcher anticipated more volunteers for the #1 Experimental Group to be in the 30 plus age range. This was due to the researcher's perception that this age group would have been out of school longer and would feel more anxious returning as a result. The opportunity to participate with other women in the same situation would have greater appeal

to this population. This hypothesis proved to be true. The women who actually participated in the #1 Experimental Group ranged in age from 32-45. Participants in the #2 and #3 Groups were on the average younger ranging in age from 26-42. It appeared that many subjects in these groups did not feel as concerned about their abilities to be successful in school so did not see the need to join the weekly group.

Most of the research to date has focused on the 30 plus age group. This research shows that many of these women are dealing with role conflicts of being a wife, mother, worker, friend, and student. Emotional conflicts result when women experience stress and anxiety as they attempt to balance the responsibilities and expectations associated with these many roles. These conflicts are usually accompanied by a lack of confidence in their academic skills (Bers, 1983). They might have unclear or unrealistic educational goals (King & Elledge-Heimer, 1979). Other problems or worries may be time limitations, school-related anxieties such as money problems, non-support of family members, child care responsibilities, lack of study skills, test anxiety, transportation difficulties, lack of knowledge about courses, fears about the student body, and fears about accessibility of a job after they have completed school (Anderson, 1975; Bers, 1983; Kentucky, 1991; McClain, 1977; Patterson & Blank, 1985; Richards, 1976; Scott, 1980; Wintersteen, 1982). All of these concerns can have a negative impact on a woman's self-efficacy, and, consequently, on her academic performance, which would further lower her self-efficacy. These concerns and challenges highlight the special needs of the returning woman student. In addition to counseling services provided to assist students with academic, career, financial, and personal concerns; the community college provides many workshops, classes, and programs. Topics include: time management, priority

setting, values clarification, positive attitude development, nonverbal communication, support systems development, stress management, assertiveness training, personal financial management, job-readiness skills, resume preparation, entrepreneurship, and parenting skills.

The researcher believes the addition of a women's personal growth support group to the services and programs currently being provided by counseling specialists will have positive effects on the self-efficacy of returning women students. This, in turn, will assist these women in dealing more effectively with the myriad of concerns and challenges they face as returning students.

Project Format: Group counseling/Peer support

Research has shown that group counseling is particularly valuable for women (Bers, 1983). Group counseling helps women become less isolated from each other (Burden & Gottlieb; Hartman; and Walker as cited in McManus et al., 1997) and allows them to openly discuss issues they might be hesitant to share in mixed gender groups (Enns; Fedele & Harrington; Fedele & Miller; and Walker as cited in McManus et al.). The group setting helps women share and learn about their common experiences (Burden & Gottlieb; Enns; Fedele; Fedele & Harrington; and Hartman as cited in McManus et al.), as well as their own uniqueness (Butler & Wintram; Fedele; and Fedele & Harrington as cited in McManus et al.). Women have a need for validation and affirmation from others that may precede their moving toward greater challenges (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). Furthermore, each woman functions as a role model for other group members (Fedele & Miller; Hartman; and Walker as cited in McManus et al., 1997). Women learn to value and trust other women and by extension, learn to value and

trust themselves (Burden & Gottlieb; Butler & Wintram; Fedele & Harrington; and Fedele & Miller as cited in McManus et al.).

Project Theory/Result: Self-Efficacy

The group format used in this study is based on the Adlerian theory of counseling. The Adlerian theory has been shown to be effective for encouraging and empowering group members and has a strong emphasis on education (Hawes, 1985). The variable of self-efficacy, thought to improve as a result of using this form of counseling, is based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Activities included in the #1 Experimental Group weekly sessions were based on Cognitive Theory. Cognitive Theory is considered an antidote for individuals who have a pessimistic outlook, and it provides a person with skills to overcome a sense of helplessness. This theory encourages members to reframe situations, externalize causes, as well as limit ruminations over possible threats (Seligman, as cited in Crawford, 1995).

Recent studies have revealed that psychological strengths such as self-efficacy are enhanced by group counseling (Lightsey, 1997). Self-efficacy is defined as a person's confidence in her ability to do something successfully. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy states that people guide their lives by their beliefs of personal efficacy. Specific self-efficacy expectancies seem to achieve their influence by affecting both willingness to engage in behaviors and to tenaciously hold on to their attempts to master behaviors (Bandura as cited by Lightsey, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments/performances. These beliefs differ in level, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1997a) and they regulate human

functioning in four major ways: (1) Cognitive-people with high self-efficacy visualize successful outcomes instead of dwelling on personal deficiencies or ways in which things might go wrong. High self-efficacy people lower their stress and anxiety by acting in ways that make the environment less threatening. People with high coping capacities have better control over disturbing thoughts. (2) Motivational-people motivate themselves by believing in their ability to attain their goals and adjust their beliefs based on their progress. (3) Mood/affect-people believe they can manage threats and are less distressed by them. (4) People with low self-efficacy do not develop satisfying social relationships that make stress easier to bear (Bandura, 1997b). Depression-low self-efficacy can lead directly to depression if a person feels unable to prevent recurrent depressive thoughts. Low self-efficacy causes the defeat of one's hopes, the resulting low mood further weakens self-efficacy, creating a vicious downward cycle.

People's beliefs in their efficacy can have diverse effects. Such beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, the extent of effort they put forth in given endeavors, the length of time they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and the resilience they have to adversity. These beliefs also influence whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, the amount of stress and depression they experience in coping with environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize (Bandura, 1997a).

Psychological treatments work best when they provide tools for managing any situation that might arise. Treatment should equip people to take control of their lives and start a process of self-regulative change guided by a resilient sense of personal

efficacy (Bandura, 1997b). This project is a first step in providing women community college students with tools to help manage stressors in their academic and personal lives.

There is general agreement that returning women students need both individual and group counseling support (Cowan, 1979; Blimline, 1979; Holt as cited in Bers, 1983). Counseling support should be focused on the concerns research has identified: limited self-esteem; role conflict; coping with major life transitions; time management; feelings of inadequacy; feelings of guilt, shame, and ineptness; fear of success; and lack of assertiveness (Bers, 1983; McManus et al., 1997; Scott, 1980). The group setting helps women share and learn about their common experiences (Burden & Gottlieb; Enns; Fedele; Fedele & Harrington; and Hartman as cited in McManus et al.), as well as their own uniqueness (Butler & Wintram; Fedele; and Fedele & Harrington as cited in McManus et al.). Each woman in the group functions as a role model for the other group members (Fedele & Miller; Hartman; and Walker as cited in McManus et al.). Recent studies have revealed that psychological strengths such as self-efficacy are enhanced by group counseling and may contribute to counseling outcomes (Lightsey, 1997).

Chapter III

Methodology

Overview

The purpose of this project was to address the issue of improving the self-efficacy of returning women community college students. For the purposes of this project, returning women were those over the age of 25 who were attending college for the first time or were returning to college after a break to marry, raise a family, work, etc. Returning women students account for 58% (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 1995) of the student population in community colleges nationwide. Community college counseling centers provide programs to meet the needs of and provide services to a broad student population. However, the researcher felt that a program developed specifically for returning women was needed to support and meet the needs of this large population. This paper examines a program intended to provide this population with a means to improve self-efficacy through a personal growth support group format. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy is defined as the confidence a woman has in her ability to be successful at some task. This will be measured by self-report instruments.

Each potential group member was interviewed to determine compatibility of group goals, as identified by the researcher, with the woman's goal/reason for joining the group. These members were students who responded to the publicity about the group or who

were referred by counselors in the community college. Group membership was voluntary. There were to be no more than 10 women selected to be group members in the first Experimental Group (#1). However, only five women were willing and able to participate in the #1 Experimental Group.

A second Experimental Group (#2) was made up of women over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate and were willing to complete the four measurements - once at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester – from a psychology class conducted by a community college counselor. A Control Group (#3) consisted of women over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate and were willing to complete the four measurements, once at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester - from two other psychology classes taught by psychology department faculty. A "session plan" was used to outline each of the eight sessions attended by the #1 Experimental Group. Each plan listed objectives and procedures for each session. Experimental Group #1 members were given three measurements during each of the eight sessions: (1) a General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993; Woodruff & Cashman, 1993), (2) an adaptation of Lent's Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Lent, 1997), and (3) the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988)(see Appendixes A - C). In addition, during the first and eighth sessions, the #1 Experimental Group was also given the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1986)(see Appendix D). The #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group were given the same four measurements, once at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. These four measurements provided data used to run a pre-test, post-test, three-group design among the two experimental groups (#1 and

#2) and the #3 Control Group as well as a single-subject design within the #1 Experimental Group. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews, field notes and researcher observations. The quantitative data from the #1 Experimental Group were also compared to the #1 group member's self-reports and qualitative data collected by the researcher to determine their relationship.

Program Description

The personal growth support group addressed six topics during the second through the seventh meetings. These topics were: (1) communication skills, (2) study skills, (3) goal-setting strategies, (4) personal power concepts, (5) types of self-care, and (6) strategies to change negative thinking patterns to positive thinking patterns. Topics were presented by the group facilitator in both a lecture and group discussion format to foster learning and critical thinking of each topic by group members. Group discussions addressed ways in which these ideas/skills could be applied to group members' lives today and in the future. Group discussion enabled members to share experiences and feelings with each other while also receiving feedback and emotional support and encouragement. The first group session was used to introduce the members and the facilitator to each other; develop group norms and guidelines; explore fears, hopes, and goals of the members; clarify each person's expectations, and start the process of developing trust among the group members and the facilitator. The eighth and final regular group session was used to consolidate learning, deal with any unfinished business and feelings of separation, review the group experience, and to give and receive feedback from members and the facilitator. During the second through the seventh group sessions, group members completed the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, the General

Self-Efficacy Scale and the Beck's Anxiety Inventory (See Appendixes A-C). Group members completed these three measurements plus the Adaptation to College Questionnaire (See Appendix D) during the first and last sessions. During the seventh session members also completed an individual participant questionnaire (See Appendix E). Group members completed two evaluation forms (See Appendixes F & G) during the eighth and final regular session. A follow-up session was held with the Group members three weeks after the final session. At that time, members were asked to reflect on their group experience, provide feedback on the usefulness of the topics covered during the sessions, and to reevaluate the program design and relevance of the experience to them personally.

Population

Participants in the personal growth support group (Experimental Group #1) were women, over the age of 25 referred to the researcher by a community college counselor. Each woman was personally interviewed by the researcher to determine appropriateness for inclusion in the group based on the individual student needs/desires and the goals the researcher identified for the group. The Experimental Group #2 were women students, over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate in completing the pre- and posttest measurements. These students were members of an sixteen-week psychology course taught by a community college counselor. The Control Group #3 were women students, over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate in taking the pre and posttest measurements, and who were members of two other sixteen-week psychology classes.

Research Design

This project used a group design with multiple measures given to the group members of the #1 Experimental Group over a period of eight sessions; and a pre-test, post-test, three group design for comparison between the two Experimental (#1 and #2) Groups and the #3 Control Group. The #1 Experimental Group were returning women students who participated in the personal growth support group involving the eight structured sessions. The #2 Experimental Group were returning women students who were members of a community college counselor's sixteen-week psychology class. The #3 Control Group were community college returning women students enrolled in two other sixteen-week psychology classes. These were women over the age of 25 who volunteered to participate and complete the pre- and post-test measurements. The General Self-Efficacy Scale, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, and Beck Anxiety Inventory were given to the #1 Experimental Group during each of the eight group sessions. The Adjustment to College Scale was given to the #1 Experimental Group during the first and eighth group sessions. The #2 Experimental and #3 Control groups were given all four measurements at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the sixteen-week semester. The #1 Experimental Group members were interviewed three weeks after the regular group sessions. These structured interviews provided a means of follow-up as recommended by group researchers (Corey & Corey, 1997).

Data Collected

Interviews

Corey and Corey (1997) recommend that group facilitators conduct a private interview with prospective group members to determine if the group would be beneficial to

the prospective members, as well as if the prospective members would be compatible with the goals of the group. The researcher received the names and phone numbers of women who seemed interested in this type of group from an informed community college counselor; if selected these women would comprise Experimental Group #1. Individual meetings were arranged between the group facilitator and each prospective member. The researcher used a set of questions (See Appendix P) to gather data from each woman to determine her reasons for wanting to join this group. The researcher described her background, the reasons for the establishment of the group, and the goals the researcher had set for the group. Interviewees were encouraged to ask questions to ensure understanding of group member responsibilities and those of the facilitator. Questions were also asked concerning the woman's feelings about being in school; if she was receiving support from her family and/or friends with regard to her return to school; and if she had participated in any other type of group before. By the end of the interview, both the facilitator and the prospective group member had gathered data with which to make a decision concerning whether the interviewee would join the group.

Corey and Corey (1997) suggest a follow-up session after the termination of a group as an invaluable accountability measure. This session gives the participants a chance to share with the facilitator what, if any, impact the group has had on them and how they view the group experience after a short break from attending. The information gathered during this interview (See Appendix T) included how useful each member viewed the topics covered during the group; how she plans to use those topics that were most useful; how she would rate the design/format of the group; and the impact the group experience had on her, her attitude about college, her personal life, and in her confidence to be successful in college.

Instruments

Instrument 1: The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) is an adaptation of Lent's Self-Efficacy for Broad Academic Milestones Scale (1997). Dr. Lent provided a copy of his scale with permission to adapt it to this study's population and institution. This instrument consists of 10 items on a 10-point Likert scale in which high scores indicate high self-efficacy. The internal consistency for Lent's measure has a coefficient alpha of 88.

Instrument 2: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Sherer, Maddus, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, and Rogers, 1982) assesses general expectations of self-efficacy, based on Bandura's (1977) theory (see Appendix B). This instrument consists of 17 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale in which high scores indicate high self-efficacy. High internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and criterion validity have been reported for this measure (Sherer, et al., 1982).

Construct validity has been assessed using the Internal-External Control Scale (I-E) (Rotter, 1966); the Personal Control Subscale of the I-E Scale (Gurin, Gurin, Lao & Beattie, 1969); the Ego Competency Scale (Holland & Baird, 1968); and a Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Moderate correlations were found with each instrument.

Instrument 3: The Beck's Anxiety Inventory (Beck, 1987) (See Appendix C) assesses the severity of anxiety symptoms in individuals. This instrument consists of 21 items which represent an anxiety symptom that is rated for severity on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from *Not at all* to *Severely, I could barely stand it.*

Internal consistency reliability coefficients range between .85 and .94 with test-retest reliability data from Beck et al. (1988) shown as a coefficient of .75 over one week. These data are based on three studies.

Instrument 4: The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk,1989) (See Appendix D) assesses students' adaptation to college, the college and academic environment, and college life. This instrument consists of 67 items rated on a 9-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *Applies Very Closely to Me* to *Doesn't Apply to Me at All.* The alpha coefficients for the scale range from .92 to .95. The questionnaire is divided into four principal subscales that focus on certain aspects of adjustment to college. The subscales are identified as: Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and the Goal Commitment/Institutional Attachment subscale.

Questionnaire

At the completion of the seventh group session members were asked to complete a questionnaire (See Appendix E). This questionnaire contained a combination of the questions asked of the participants during the initial screening interview and those asked during the follow-up interview session. Topics covered were: (1) reasons for returning to/starting college, (2) reasons for joining the group, (3) most useful topics covered and other topics she would have liked to have seen covered, (4) support or lack of support of family and/or friends concerning her return to college, (5) individual reasons for making the effort to attend the group, (6) which element of the group she found personally the most important/beneficial,

(e.g., discussion, support, topics) and (7) if she would have attended the group had she not received the one credit hour.

Evaluations

Corey and Corey (1997) recommend using an evaluation instrument at the end of a group to help members make a personal assessment of the group while helping the facilitator know the interventions that were helpful and the aspects of the group that were least helpful. The researcher developed two evaluation forms to gather these data. The first form, Group Reaction Form (See Appendix F), assessed the overall group experience. Members were asked to assess if the time allotted for the group was adequate; if the facilitator was knowledgeable, prepared and organized; if the topics were relevant to the group purpose; whether the group was enjoyable and worth the members' time. The second form, Personal Group Evaluation (See Appendix G), assessed if the group helped the member personally. Each participant was asked if she felt the group had helped her with: (1) her self-concept, (2) educational goals, (3) personal goals, (4) improvement of skills, (5) confidence in her ability to succeed in college, (6) confidence in her ability to succeed in other areas of her life, and (7) confidence in her ability to reach the goals she has set for herself. These forms consisted of eight and ten questions, respectively, to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. These measurements were developed specifically for this research project.

Observations

Merriam (1998) uses Kidder's definition of observation as a research tool when it "(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded

systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability". Merriam (1998) describes participant observation as a schizophrenic activity in that the researcher usually participates but not to the extent of becoming totally absorbed in the activity, staying sufficiently detached to observe and analyze. She also admits it is a marginal position and personally difficult to sustain. In this study the researcher was a main participant in the group as the facilitator. Merriam (1998) identifies a concern as to the extent the observer-investigator affects what is being observed. In this study the researcher is facilitating and teaching each of which, by their nature, suggests that the participants in the group will be affected. The researcher has met the four criteria of observation as a research tool during this study and as cited above. However, staying detached and not affecting what was being observed become extremely problematic. The researcher has tried to identify for the reader, in the Results chapter, incidents of realization where she did not meet these areas of concern. Observations will include those gained during the initial screening interview, as well as those from each of the eight group sessions and follow-up session.

Data Analysis

Qualitative/Case Study Methods

Merriam (1997) describes the key philosophical assumption on which qualitative research is based - the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. She further explains that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed - that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in that world. To understand the feelings and thoughts of women over the age of 25 who are returning to or just starting college, the researcher felt it was important

to interact with them and see how they make sense of this experience. To make this a manageable task, a small group of volunteers was asked to participate in a personal-growth support group. This group made up this case study. Merriam (1997) defines a case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. To determine the sense participants made out of this experience, the researcher used several data collection techniques: (1) interviews, (2) instruments, (3) questionnaire, (4) evaluations, and (5) observations. Analysis of qualitative case study data requires consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the above five forms of data collected. This analysis was done for data collected from each woman in the personal-growth support group (#1 Experimental Group). The resulting data were compared between session weeks for each woman, as well as, between women. The use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis, also known as triangulation, is used to strengthen reliability and internal validity of the study. The pre-test/post-test data (instrument) collected from the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group were compared to each other and to the data from the #1 Experimental Group.

Computer Programs

Data received from the four instruments were tabulated using standard descriptive statistics, including mean, sum of squares, F ratio, and significance. These data were compared to qualitative data gathered by the researcher to determine if the quantitative data support or refute the researcher's observations, and the self-reports of the participants. The software used were EXCEL and Statistical Program for the Social Studies.

Research Issues

One of the main concerns of research is the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. This question of generalizability has been considered as a major challenge for qualitative studies. This concern comes from viewing generalizability of qualitative research in the same way as quantitative research. Merriam (1997) states that in qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many. Is generalization from a small, nonrandom sample possible? Only, most writers contend, if "generalization" is reframed to reflect the assumptions underlying qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 1997). Merriam (1997) cites six other writers who have tackled this notion of generalizability with other more descriptive terms such as, working hypotheses, concrete universals, naturalistic generalization, and user or reader generalizability. To enhance the possibility that the results of a qualitative study would be generalizable in any of these senses, Merriam (1997) suggests using rich, thick description so that readers will be able to determine how closely each of their situations matches the research situation, or by describing how typical the individual is compared with others in the same group. This allows the readers to make comparisons with their situations. The understanding of the particular (#1 Experimental Group) in depth is the basis for this study. Would the support from other women and the program of topics have an impact on the self-efficacy of the group members? Merriam (1997) cites Erickson's contention that the search is for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other cases studied in equally great detail. She likened this to how most people cope with everyday life, taking what we learn in a

particular situation and transferring or generalizing to a similar situation we might encounter. Qualitative research will continue to be the object of debate due to its approach being based on different assumptions and a different worldview than traditional research. This researcher feels the benefit of observing and interacting with a small group is the best way to know and understand what the experience was like for the women involved. The quantitative data collected help to provide validation of what has already been observed.

Chapter IV

Results

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if a personal-growth support group would positively impact the self-efficacy of returning women community college students. A group format program was developed by the researcher using previous research, information from graduate class work and her own experiences as a returning woman student in the process of self-discovery. The researcher was a participant observer during the data collection. As previously indicated, Merriam (1998) describes participant observation as a schizophrenic activity in that the researcher usually participates but not to the extent of becoming totally absorbed in the activity, staying sufficiently detached to observe and analyze. She also admits it is a marginal position and personally difficult to sustain. By the very nature of this study the researcher was a main participant in the group as the facilitator. Merriam (1998) identifies a concern as to the extent the observer investigator affects what is being observed. In this study the researcher is facilitating and teaching, each of which, by their nature, suggests affecting those participating in the group. As a teacher and counselor, the researcher wants to affect those with whom she comes in contact. Later in this narrative you will read of some dichotomies faced by the group participants. The analysis of the data collected identified seven emergent themes used as a set of conceptual filters to discern

patterns throughout this study. These themes were: (1) academic self-efficacy, (2) general self-efficacy, (3) anxiety/stress level, (4) adaptation to college, (5) support/belonging, (6) self knowledge, and (7) skills. A description of these themes and their significance as they emerged from the analysis of the data is included in this chapter.

Interviews

One of the most challenging tasks of setting up a research project is finding a time during which prospective participants can meet with the researcher. Everyone is very busy with family, work, friends, school, and all those other things people squeeze into their daily lives. Three of the five women who participated in the #1 Experimental Group arranged to take the time in between classes at the community college. Identifying each other was always tricky since we had only spoken on the phone. During these conversations the researcher described herself to each participant. There is that look of, 'are you the one' that the researcher identified while scanning the crowd. So on three different days she found herself in the waiting area of the counseling center, which is located inside the community college library. She watched the flow of people coming and going trying to find someone with the "look." The researcher and prospective group members eventually found each other with embarrassed smiles because each were worried they would greet someone who really wasn't the person for whom they were waiting. An after the fact comment from a mentor provided a simple solution to this identification problem; the researcher could wear a nametag. The researcher and prospective group member made their way to the back of the library to a study table divided down the middle by a short wall of pressed wood. Sitting down, the researcher would thank them for meeting with her and again explain that the group the research was

going to facilitate was part of her doctoral project. This fact had been previously explained when the researcher had spoken to each of the women on the phone to set up a time and place to meet. The researcher would then tell each woman about herself, her background and why she had selected this particular topic for her doctoral project. She explained to them that she had some questions (See Appendix P) that she wanted to ask to ensure she collected the information she needed. To assist the reader in identifying each of the group members, the researcher will provide each woman with a code name. The women she met at the community college were: S1, K1, and R1. After getting demographic information, which included their ages (all three women were in their 30s), the researcher asked what attracted them to the personal-growth support group. One woman, S1, summed it up by saying, "It fits me!" They all mentioned the topics/skills that were going to be covered over the course of the sessions, as well as having other women who were going through the same thing as a support system. This theme was mentioned by all of the group members during the interviews, throughout the sessions, and at the ending of the group. The next question concerning what each woman wanted personally to get from the group brought responses ranging from helpful information to self-discovery and self-knowledge. The one word that all three women used to describe her feelings about being in school was excited. Apprehensive, scared and worried were also mentioned. This is just one of the dichotomies faced by these women. They were excited about returning to school, learning, being successful, while also being worried and scared as to whether they could do the work, understand the subjects and get good grades. This tremendous challenge represents the main point of this study and is the reason why it is used as the title of this dissertation. In between the researcher's questions and their answers, each

woman revealed things about herself and her current life situation. These pieces of information provide a context with which the researcher can extend her view of the group members. Something mentioned in the interview can provide a starting point for opening a topic during one of the sessions or can be used as a question to help a woman make a connection that will be meaningful for her. But ultimately, the time spent during the interview also provides time to get to know one another and to become comfortable with each other. These interviews are necessary to build the trust needed between members of a group to ensure open, helpful dialog and sharing among all group members.

The other two women who completed the group made time to meet the researcher at locations convenient with their busy schedules. She met one at the Borders Book Store at Pentagon City and the other at the Heidelberg Bakery in Arlington. It was a busy Saturday at Pentagon City and people were rushing around to get necessary errands done. This time it was easier to recognize the woman with whom the researcher was to meet because she looked like she sounded, high energy, bubbly personality, and a very fast talker. She will be identified as B1. They introduced themselves and she introduced the researcher to her husband and niece who were accompanying her. They found a table for two and began the interview. The amount of activity surrounding the researcher and prospective group member was high but they were able to stay focused on the questions and learned more about each other. B1 revealed that the idea of a support system of women was very important to her and her main reason for wanting to join this group. Since this would be her first credit hour at the community college she was very interested in the topics and skills that were going to be covered during the group sessions. She, like the other women the researcher had already

interviewed, described her feelings about school as first and foremost, exciting! She was also scared since it had been a long time since she had been in school. This woman and the one the researcher met later in the day were the oldest of the five women, both being in their 40s. She was very organized and had several questions to ask the researcher. Her enthusiasm was wonderful and the researcher told her she would be a great addition to the group as they parted to go their separate ways.

The final woman who completed the personal-growth support group met the researcher at the Heidelberg Bakery. The tables and chairs were empty except for the researcher and a young couple, so it was easy for this woman to identify whom she was to meet. This woman's code name is P1. They introduced themselves and the researcher was immediately struck by the aura of strength this woman presented. She was attracted to the group because of the topics that were going to be covered especially the communication, study, and goal-setting skills. She said her main goal was to achieve the support of the group as well as feedback from them to assist her in finding a sense of direction for herself. Her feelings about being in school echoed the other four women: excited and scared. She revealed that she had been taking classes off and on for a number of years but she had decided she needed to get focused and to complete her degree. She felt that the personal-growth support group would introduce her to some like-minded women with whom to share the frustration and excitement of going to college while juggling the rest of her life.

From these initial interviews the researcher was able to get a glimpse of the women with whom she would be meeting for eight weeks. This glimpse was just a starting point from which to gather additional data concerning their lives, beliefs, and feelings about what they are

currently confronting in order to be able to attend college classes. The interviews gave the researcher an idea about which components of the group were important to which individuals. But they also validated that the topics that had been selected and the key element of having a support system were important to all of the women. The themes of support, self-knowledge, skills, and anxiety were important to all the group members. The feelings of being excited and scared were shared by all of these women with the researcher.

The follow-up interview was held three weeks after the ending of the group. This time was selected due to the holiday season. The researcher wanted the interview to be informal yet structured enough to collect some "hard" data. To this end, a set of questions was prepared and each group member completed the sheet (See Appendix T). All of the topics presented during the group sessions were useful to all women with one exception. P1 did not find the study skills useful. The form also asked each member to rate the format and design of the group. The 'number of sessions' item was not liked by K1. She would have wanted more than eight sessions. S1 was neutral on the number of sessions. P1 was neutral on two additional items. The first was the amount of time available for group members to talk/share and the second was the location in which the group sessions were held. Two questions on the sheet required a written answer. The first question was - How do you plan to use the topics you rated as VERY useful? The responses were as follows: B1, "In my personal life and professional (life)." K1, "I am using them every day, especially when dealing with the co-worker who sits next to me!!" P1, "Everyday use with friends and family." R1, "I've found each and every topic to be helpful with everyday things all the way to planning my day; and with obstacles in my life." S1, "In my personal and professional relationships." The second

question that required a written answer was - What impact has the group experience had on you, your attitude about college, your personal life, and on your confidence in your ability to be successful in college? This is how each woman answered this question: B1, "I can do anything I want to bad enough. For me-retain 99.9% of my power and communicate with my new husband better." K1, "I feel great after meeting with everyone. It is always positive and supportive even despite the fact that I'm not talking much (!)." P1, "Very good. I've done some changes about completing classes." R1, "This has been one of the most wonderful experiences I've had in my life. I've made such a strong bond with the other members in the group!" S1, "Personal growth!"

The follow-up interview provided the researcher an opportunity to gather additional data from group members concerning the impact the group experience was or was not having on each woman. Data collected from the interview questions indicate each participant was still using some of the skills covered during the sessions. Themes identified from the follow-up interview included: skills, self-knowledge, and support. The group members also expressed satisfaction with the format and design of the group. The written data were also validated by the researcher's observations.

The follow-up interview questions also provided data concerning the usefulness of the topics covered during the eight-week period. These data were analyzed to help answer research question #2: Question 2: Which group experiences/topics were reported to be the most and least beneficial to the returning women students in the #1 Experimental Group? Data from the follow-up interview questionnaire indicated the three most beneficial topics for

the #1 Experimental Group were: personal power, communication skills, and goal-setting skills. The least beneficial topic was study skills.

Instruments

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) is an adaptation of Lent's Self-Efficacy for Broad Academic Milestones Scale (1997). Dr. Lent provided the researcher a copy of his scale with permission to adapt it to this study's population and institution. This instrument consists of 10 items on a 10-point Likert scale in which high scores indicate high self-efficacy.

Since this personal-growth support group was designed for returning women students in the community college, the researcher felt that along with a sense of general self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy should also be a focus. The literature review performed as a part of this project, revealed that the majority of research has been on subject-specific academic self-efficacy. These subject areas included: mathematics, writing, career decision-making, and computer technology. Most studies used self-report methods to gather data. The researcher tried to locate a published instrument to be used during this project to measure academic self-efficacy but was unable to do so. After reading Dr. Lent's article (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997), the researcher contacted Dr. Lent by e-mail, asking if she could obtain a copy of the Self-Efficacy for Broad Academic Milestones Scale. Dr. Lent responded to this request with several cautions. He noted that he and his fellow researchers designed this measure for a very specific research purpose and for a specific population. He also cautioned this researcher in three areas: (1) the need to be sure that the use of such a measure is appropriate to the criteria

of interest in this study, (2) be aware that such measures may encounter problems of negative skew and truncated response ranges (e.g., overconfident ratings) if the items are not viewed as sufficiently challenging by this project's target population, and (3) since it is a self-report measure, it could be easily distorted if respondents perceive it will be used for such purposes as selection or placement. Dr. Lent provided the researcher a copy of his scale with permission to modify it to accommodate the purposes of this study, while asking that above cautions be taken into account. The researcher modified the scale to reflect the community college population of this study and provided the women completing the measurement a brief explanation of its data collecting purpose.

The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale was completed by #1 Experimental Group members during each of the eight sessions. This scale was also completed by the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group. These groups completed this scale in a pre-test, post-test design. These data were analyzed by aligning the pre-test for groups #2 and #3 with week one of the experimental #1 Group. The post-test data from groups #2 and #3 were aligned with week eight of the experimental #1 Group data. These data were analyzed to help answer research questions #1and #3: Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the General Self-Efficacy Scale, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data? Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group? A one-way analysis of variance of scores for all three groups was done to determine if a significant difference existed among the means of

the academic self-efficacy scale scores for all groups. Table 1 shows variance of all three groups. There was no significant difference between the three groups.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Covariates	12.637	1	12.637	14.856	.002
Group	4.5	2	2.3	.026	.974

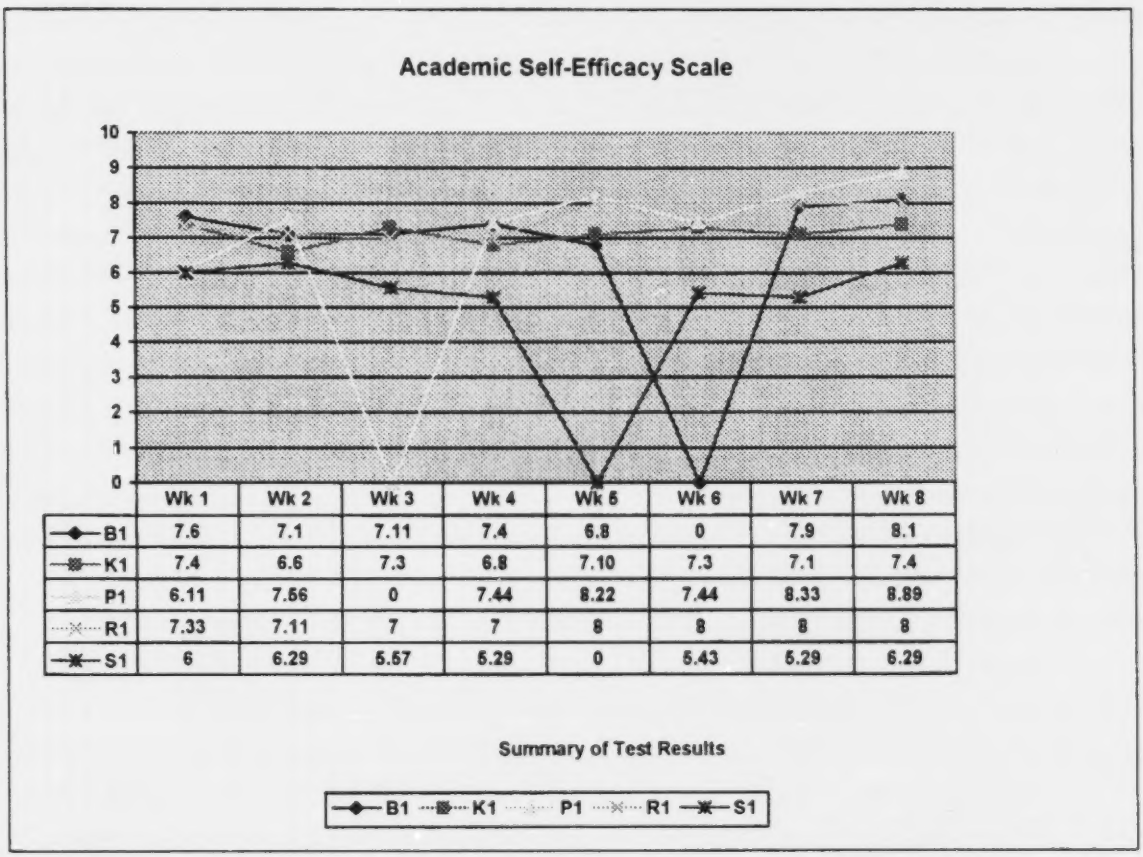
The data analysis revealed slight differences in the mean score for each group over the eight weeks of data collection for the #1 Experimental Group, as well as from the pre-test to the post-test of groups #2 and #3. Table 2 shows these differences.

Table 2

Mean Academic Self-Efficacy Scale Scores

Group	Wk 1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8
#1	6.8889	6.9305	5.3965	6.7860	6.0244	5.6346	7.3238	7.7349
#2	7.0858							7.7606
#3	6.3704							7.2593

The mean academic self-efficacy scores do show an increase for all three groups in Table 2. Questions 1 and 3 can be answered positively. A small difference in mean, while not statistically significant, is indicated as a change and increase in academic self-efficacy for all three groups. The change was greatest for Group #3, followed by Group #1, and the smallest change was found in Group #2.



	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8
B1	7.6	7.1	7.11	7.4	6.8	0	7.9	8.1
K1	7.4	6.6	7.3	6.8	7.10	7.3	7.1	7.4
P1	6.11	7.56	0	7.44	8.22	7.44	8.33	8.89
R1	7.33	7.11	7	7	8	8	8	8
S1	6	6.29	5.57	5.29	0	5.43	5.29	6.29

Figure 1. The Academic Self-Efficacy mean results of each #1 Group member for the eight sessions. A score of zero for the week indicates the group member was absent from that session. Except for one woman, the group members consistently reported week-to-week changes in academic self-efficacy. The observations by the researcher for each group session revealed a tendency for the women to have higher self reported scores on nights they were feeling "up" and positive about themselves and their day. Lower scores were noted on nights that followed a difficult day at work or a challenge in their personal lives.

General Self-Efficacy Scale

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Sherer, Maddus, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, and Rogers, 1982) assesses general expectations of self-efficacy, based on Bandura's (1977) theory (see Appendix B). This instrument consists of 17 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale in which high scores indicate high self-efficacy.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale was completed by the #1 Experimental Group members during each of the eight sessions. This scale was also completed by the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group. These groups completed the scale in a pre-test, post-test design. These data were analyzed by aligning the pre-test for Groups #2 and #3 with week one of the experimental #1 Group. The post-test data from groups #2 and #3 were aligned with week eight of the experimental #1 Group data. These data were analyzed to help answer research questions #1 and #3: Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the General Self-Efficacy Scale, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data? Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in the #2

Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group? A one-way analysis of variance of scores for all three groups was done to determine if a significant difference existed among the means of the general self-efficacy scale scores for all groups. Table 3 shows variance of all three groups. There was no significant difference between the three groups.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance for General Self-Efficacy Scale

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Covariates	2.299	1	2.299	4.907	.045
Group	2.124	2	1.062	2.267	.143

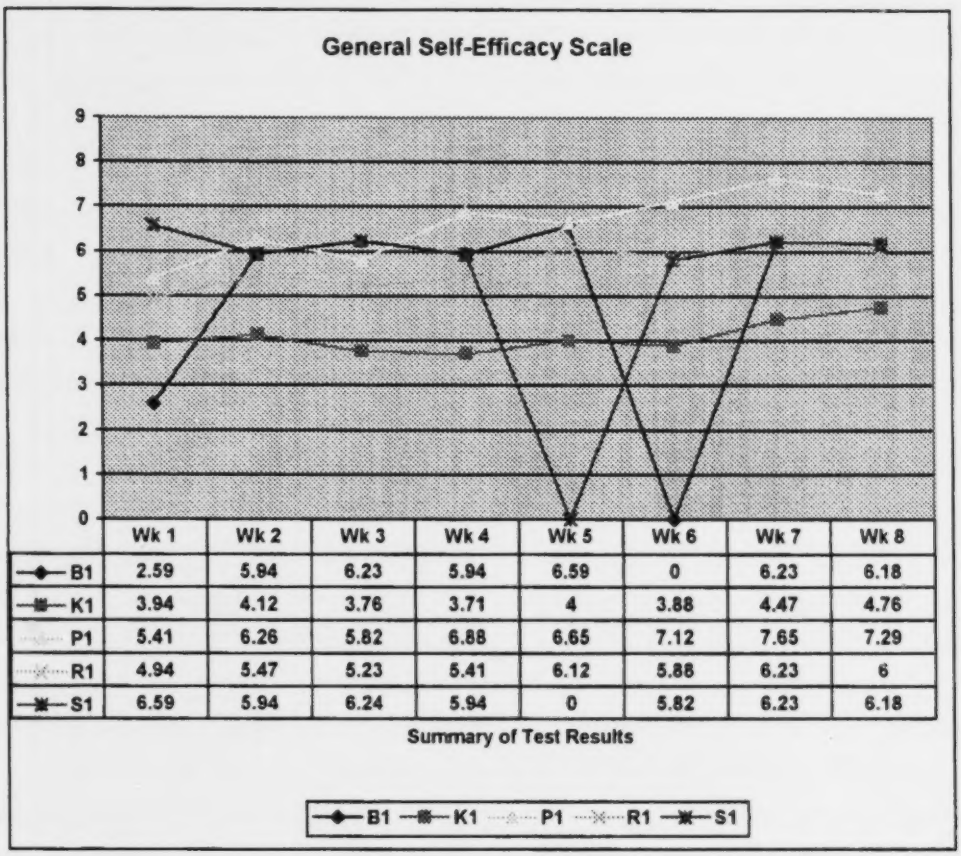
The data analysis revealed slight differences in the mean score for each group over the eight weeks of data collection for the #1 Experimental Group, as well as from the pre-test to the post-test of groups #2 and #3. Table 4 shows these differences.

Table 4

Mean General Self-Efficacy Scale Scores

Group	Wk 1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8
#1	4.6940	5.5520	5.4560	5.5768	5.9900	5.7040	6.1620	6.0820
#2	4.9478							5.3811
#3	4.4700							5.3133

The mean general self-efficacy scores do show an increase for all three groups on Table 2. Questions 1 and 3 can be answered positively. A small difference in mean, while not statistically significant, is indicated as a change and increase in the general self-efficacy of group members. The greatest change was found in Group #1, the next greatest change was in Group #3, and the smallest change was found in Group #2.



	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8
B1	2.59	5.94	6.23	5.94	6.59	0	6.23	6.18
K1	3.94	4.12	3.76	3.71	4	3.88	4.47	4.76
P1	5.41	6.26	5.82	6.88	6.65	7.12	7.65	7.29
R1	4.94	5.47	5.23	5.41	6.12	5.88	6.23	6
S1	6.59	5.94	6.24	5.94	0	5.82	6.23	6.18

Figure 2. The General Self-Efficacy mean results of each #1 Group member for the eight sessions. A score of zero for the week indicates the group member was absent from that session. The mean score for each group member fluctuated each week throughout the eight

sessions. For three of the five women, the first week's score is their lowest score. The researcher observed, during the first session, some normal apprehension of starting something new in the group members. A lower score for this week's mean would seem appropriate. The one group member who, by observation, appeared the least self-assured, had the highest mean score the first week. This might indicate an over compensation of self-reporting due to nervousness or the desire to please the researcher. The fifth woman was the quietest of the group and made comparing of observations and quantitative data difficult.

Beck's Anxiety Inventory

The Beck's Anxiety Inventory (Beck, 1987) (See Appendix C) assesses the severity of anxiety symptoms in individuals. This instrument consists of 21 items which represent an anxiety symptom that is rated for severity on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from *Not at all* to *Severely; I could barely stand it.*

The Beck's Anxiety Inventory was completed by the #1 Experimental Group members during each of the eight sessions. This inventory was also completed by the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group. These groups completed the inventory in a pre-test, post-test design. These data were analyzed by aligning the pre-test for Groups #2 and #3 with week one of the Experimental #1 Group. The post-test data from Groups #2 and #3 were aligned with week eight of the Experimental #1 Group data. These data were analyzed to help answer research questions #1 and #3: Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the General Self-Efficacy Scale, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data? Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in

the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group? While the Beck's Anxiety Inventory is not an instrument to measure self-efficacy, it does allow for a self-report of anxiety symptoms. Research has shown that the returning women student population experience many anxieties concerning their return to college. These anxieties negatively impact women student's self-efficacy. A high score on the anxiety inventory indicates a self-reported high level of anxiety. As self-efficacy improves, a decrease in anxiety symptoms would be expected.

A one-way analysis of covariance of scores for all three groups was done to determine if a significant difference existed among the means of the anxiety inventory scores for all groups. Table 5 shows variance of all three groups. There was no significant difference between the three groups.

Table 5

Analysis of Variance for the Beck's Anxiety Inventory

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Covariates	1.075	1	1.075	10.883	.006
Group	.270	2	.135	1.365	.290

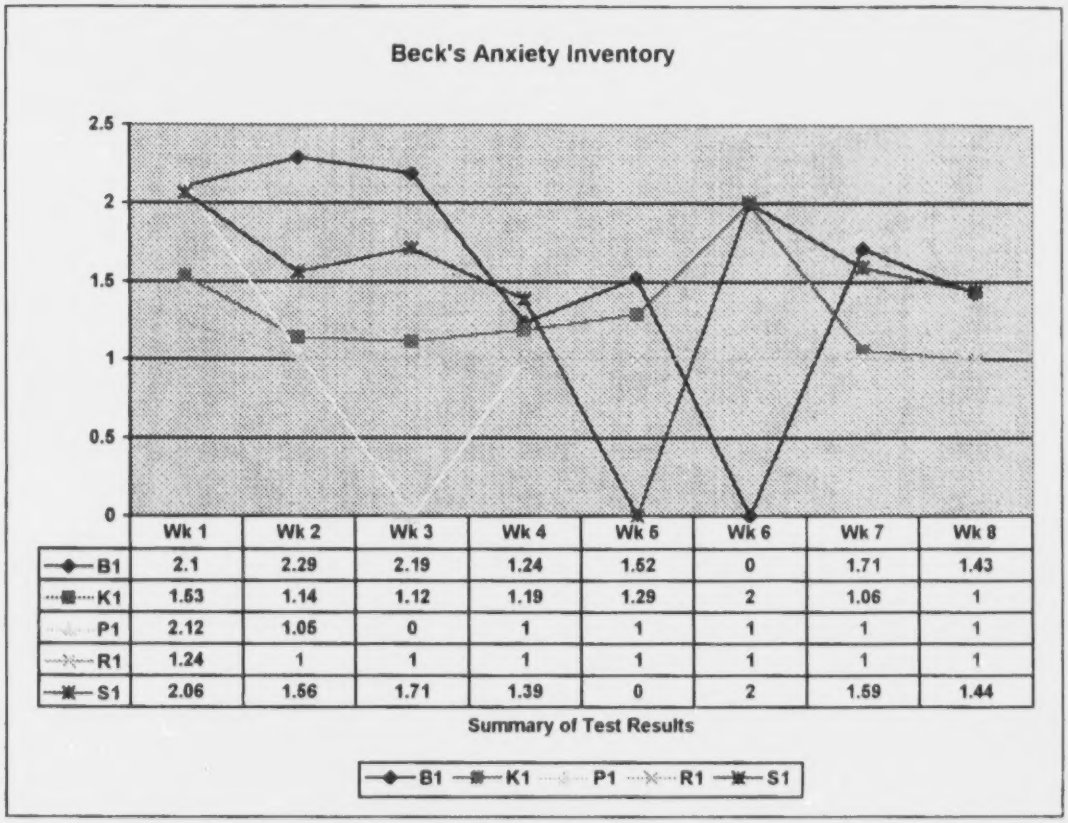
The data analysis revealed slight differences in the mean score for each group over the eight weeks of data collection for the #1 Experimental Group, as well as from the pre-test to the post-test of Groups #2 and #3. Table 6 shows these differences.

Table 6

Mean Beck's Anxiety Inventory Scores

Group	Wk 1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8
#1	1.8073	1.4068	1.2028	1.1635	.9636	1.0286	1.2723	1.1746
#2	1.8137							1.5079
#3	2.0196							1.4815

The mean anxiety inventory scores do show a decrease for all three groups on Table 6. Questions 1 and 3 can be answered positively. A small difference in mean, while not statistically significant, is indicated as a change and decrease in self-reported anxiety for all three groups. The change was greatest for Group #1, followed by Group #3, and the least amount of decrease experienced by Group #2.



	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8
B1	2.1	2.29	2.19	1.24	1.52	0	1.71	1.43
K1	1.53	1.14	1.12	1.19	1.29	2	1.06	1
P1	2.12	1.05	0	1	1	1	1	1
R1	1.24	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
S1	2.06	1.56	1.71	1.39	0	2	1.59	1.44

Figure 3. The Beck's Anxiety Inventory mean results of each #1 Group member for the eight sessions. A score of zero for the week indicates the group member was absent from that session. This is the only measurement used during this study where a low score is the desirable outcome. Two group members reported only one or two weeks of some anxiety symptoms then seemed to stay at a "normal everyday stress" level. One woman, K1, reported the highest level of anxiety symptoms the same week the researcher observed her frustration with a co-worker. For S1, weeks one and six were her self-reported highest levels of anxiety symptoms. The first week could be attributed to starting something new and unknown. Week six was the session the researcher observed S1 struggling with the concept of her

personal power and how it might be affecting her life in a negative way. The fifth woman reported more anxiety the first three weeks of the Group and then a fluctuation over the other four weeks. This was the woman who was newly married and becoming aware of her own menopausal symptoms.

The data compiled from the three measurements used to determine self-reported levels of academic self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, and anxiety symptoms were analyzed to answer two of the study's research questions. Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data? The results of the analysis of these data indicate that the #1 Experimental Group members did show higher levels of self-reported self-efficacy by the end of the eight group sessions.

Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group? The results of the analysis of the data from the three measurements indicate that both the #2 and #3 groups did show higher levels of self-reported self-efficacy from the pre-test to the post-test period.

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1989) (See Appendix D) assesses students' adaptation to college, the college and academic environment, and college life. This instrument consists of 67 items rated on a 9-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *Applies Very Closely to Me* to *Doesn't Apply to Me at All.* The questionnaire is divided into four principal subscales that focus on certain aspects of

adjustment to college. These subscales are identified as: Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and Goal Commitment/Institutional Attachment. Each of these subscales received a raw score in addition to a full-scale score. While all five scores were calculated during data analysis, only the Academic Adjustment subscale score and the full-scale score were reported on in this study. The other subscales, while important factors to consider, were not relevant to the focus and range of this project so were not reported or used to determine results.

The Academic Adjustment subscale measures a student's success in coping with the various educational demands characteristic of the college experience (Baker & Siryk, 1989). This subscale can be classified into four item clusters: motivation, application, performance, and academic environment. The efficacy of academic effort is reflected in these areas and relates to the information derived from the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale.

The data analysis of the Academic Adjustment subscale scores and the scores of the full scale scores revealed slight differences in the mean score for each group over the eight weeks of data collection for the #1 Experimental Group, as well as from the pre-test to the post-test of groups #2 and #3. Table 7 shows these differences.

Table 7

Mean Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Scores

Group	AA Pre-Test	Full Scale Pre-Test	AA Post-Test	Full Scale Post-Test
#1	151	391.8	167.2	448.8
#2	144.33	369.55	145.66	379.33
#3	146.33	354.66	168.66	417

The mean Academic Adjustment subscale scores and the full-scale scores show an increase for all three groups on Table 7. The increase in the Academic Adjustment score was greatest for Group #3, followed by Group #1, and the least amount of increase experienced by Group #2. This order of increase was the same for the full-scale score. Group #3 saw a gain of 22.33 on academic adjustment and a gain of 62.34 on the full- scale adaptation to college. Group #1's gains were 16.2 and 57 respectively, while Group #2 only realized a 1.33 gain in academic adjustment and a 9.78 gain on the full scale adaptation to college.

Data from this measurement do not directly answer any of the research questions posed in this project. However, the increase in academic adjustment and the overall adaptation to college, as shown by this measurement, support the data from the other instruments used to determine self-reported levels of academic self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, and anxiety symptoms, which in turn supports positive answers to research questions #1 and #3. Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale,

General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data? The results of the analysis of these data support the data derived from the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale indicating that the #1 Experimental Group members did show higher levels of self-reported self-efficacy by the end of the eight group sessions.

Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any change in self-efficacy of members in the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group? Using the same rationale as above, the results of the analysis of these data indicate that both the #2 and #3 groups did show higher levels of self-reported self-efficacy from the pre-test to the post-test period, with Group #2 showing the largest gain and Group #3 the smallest of all three groups.

Questionnaire

The personal-growth support group participant questionnaire (See Appendix E) was developed by the researcher to collect data at the end of the seventh session of the group. It was designed to collect more in-depth data in some areas and to ask questions that had not been previously presented. Members were asked to provide their reasons for joining the support group. B1, "I know that at this particular time in my life, with so many changes and adaptations, I would need the mental support from females other than family members." K1, "(1) It was different from the typical orientation class, (2) I've already taken a typical orientation class, (3) It was a class for women." P1, "I needed a STD (student development) class. After reading the description of the class I thought it would be great." The following is the description of the group in the community college schedule of classes:

STD 195 TOPICS IN RETURNING ADULTS

This section is for women who are interested in skills and strategies useful

for coping with, and being successful in, the return to school. Permission of the instructor required.

R1, "With my busy schedule and family duties I knew I would benefit from the class." S1, "I was looking for guidance and support." The question of support provided by friends and family for their return to college was answered by all the members as positive - they were receiving this support. Yet the theme of support from other women is referred to by all participants in their answers for the reason they had joined the support group. Research indicates that women feel less isolated and are more willing to share when in a group comprised of all women (as cited in McManus et al., 1997). Participants were also asked to rank order several components of the group. Support of other members ranged between 1-3 out of 6 possible choices for all women.

Members were asked to comment on the topics and skills presented during the group sessions and to rank order them among 6 components of the group. Session topics/skills were rated as 1, 3, or 4. The comments were: B1, "Very interesting and helpful, to be recalled and practiced for the remainder of my life." K1, "The topics were right on target and having others to listen to and share experiences with were just what the doctor ordered." P1, "I enjoyed all of the topics. I would have liked a session on women's health." R1, "Cross referencing of books on the topics, the feedback from other students, the overwhelming support for others in the group, most helpful for me was study skills." S1, "The topics covered were interesting and helpful."

Participants cited several reasons for their return to or starting of classes at the community college. These included the desire to be better educated, to earn a degree, to

improve work skills, and to possibly obtain a new job as a result of their education.

The final two questions concerned each individual's motivation to actually attend the group. This question was asked because the researcher spoke with many women who were interested in the group, but only five women actually joined and attended the group. The following are the answers provided by group members to the questions of: (1) why they made the effort to attend and (2) asking whether they would have attended the group had they not received the 1 hour of credit. B1, (1) "Self preservation/mental atonement" (2) "Absolutely!" K1, (1) "I was very interested in the class especially after interviewing with (the researcher) and hearing the topics to be discussed. I made the effort to attend because I'm paying for it and want to spend my money wisely!" (2) "Yes-definitely!" P1, (1) "The class proved to be interesting and developed into a friendship." (2) "Yes." R1, (1) "(The researcher)." (2) "Yes." S1, (1) "The group had a positive effect on my decision to go back to school." (2) "Yes."

Data collected from this questionnaire can be triangulated with the data collected from the interviews for the two themes of support and skills. These three measurements were completed before the group started, after the completion of seven group sessions, and three weeks after the ending of the group. At each of these points in time, group members provided data that support the women's sentiments that the group and the skills covered during the group were of great importance to them. This triangulation confirms the themes of support and skills as relevant for this study.

Evaluations

Corey and Corey (1997) recommend using an evaluation instrument at the end of a group to help members make a personal assessment of the group while helping the facilitator know what interventions were helpful and what aspects of the group were least helpful. The researcher developed two evaluation forms to gather this data. The first form, Group Reaction Form (See Appendix F), assessed the overall group experience. Members were asked to assess if the time allotted for the group was adequate; if the facilitator was knowledgeable, prepared and organized; if the topics were relevant to the group purpose; and whether the group was enjoyable and worth the member's time. The second form, Personal Group Evaluation (See Appendix G), assessed if the group helped the member personally. Each participant was asked if she felt the group had helped her with: (1) her self-concept, (2) educational goals, (3) personal goals, (4) improvement of skills, (5) confidence in her ability to succeed in college, (6) confidence in her ability to succeed in other areas of her life, and (7) confidence in her ability to reach the goals she has set for herself. These forms consisted of eight and ten questions, respectively, to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. These measurements were developed specifically for this research project.

The Group Reaction Form and Personal Group Evaluation were completed by the #1 Experimental Group members during the eighth and final group session. These data were analyzed to help answer research question #2: Question 2: Which group experiences/topics were reported to be the most and least beneficial to the returning women students in the #1 Experimental Group? The analysis of the data from these evaluation forms indicates the most

beneficial topic was personal power, while the ending of the group was the least beneficial part of the experience. The group participants provided the following comments in answer to these statements: (1) Please describe the most important thing you learned from the group experience and any additional comments (Personal Group Evaluation). (2) Please describe the best and worst part of the overall group experience and any additional comments (Group Reaction Form). B1 – (1) "My woman power. I really enjoyed my classmates, different but yet so much alike." (2) "Best for me: having a support group apart from family, worst: nothing. The group has made me stronger." K1 – (1) "More confidence for myself. Personal Power!" (2) "I didn't talk enough! I can't think of anything bad at all." P1 – (1) "I learned not to let people steal my personal power. (2) "(Best) Friendships formed, inner strength found. (Worst) Ending the class. I found the class to be enlightening and helpful." R1 – (1) "Encouraging, listening, learning and growing through the members in the group. This experience is one that I will keep close to me from this day forward. I truly enjoyed it." (2) "We all got real close early, from the beginning. Not enough time to go into deep conversations (we were very talkative). (The researcher) was very enrolling [sic], she always had my full attention. She is definitely a credit to her craft." S1 – (1) "I'm ok, important, and I love me." (2) "There were not bad parts, except that it had to end." (2) "We love you (researcher's name)."

Observations

A primary source of data collection in qualitative research is observations. This project has used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Several instruments and other data collecting documents were used to collect quantitative data. These

documents allowed the group participants to self-report their thoughts, feelings and reactions to statements to which they were presented. The use of the instruments ensured that each participant received the same statements to which they were to respond. The use of participant observation allowed the researcher to interact closely with the group members, establish a relationship based on trust, and observe the actions, reactions, and interactions between and among the members of the #1 experimental group.

Session 1: The #1 experimental group began meeting the first week of October on Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. It met for eight consecutive weeks, ending the week before Thanksgiving. The group met in a room on the fourth floor of the main building of the local community college. The meeting room was an interior classroom with no windows. It was a small, dingy room, wider than it was long. The desks/chairs were the typical one-piece plastic seat with paddle shaped desk surface. The old , metal desk at the front of the room was for the instructors who were assigned to teach in this room. The air conditioning was on and made the room cold. The researcher arranged six chairs in a rough circle toward the front of the room after pushing the teacher desk against the wall/blackboard. The blackboard had writing from what looked like what might have been a literature class.

Five women between the ages of 32 and 44 had agreed to participate in the group after completing a screening process. These women will be identified, in alphabetical order, as B1, K1, P1, R1, and S1. The following is a description of the actions, reactions, and interactions among and between the five group members and the researcher during the eight group sessions.

Session 1 started by the researcher thanking the five women for their participation in the group. This was followed by a short introduction of the researcher including her education, past work history, family, and the reason the group was being conducted. The women were asked to break into two groups and then to introduce themselves to the other(s) in their group. After the women had had a chance to exchange information, the large group was reformed. The facilitator then asked each person to introduce one of the people in their small group to the whole group. Once the introductions were complete, the researcher asked the women what each felt when she was introducing someone and what they felt when someone else was introducing them. Three of the women expressed similar answers. Each said they felt concern that they would forget what the other person had told them – "If I had known we were going to be asked to introduce someone else I would have listened better and taken notes." When another person was introducing them, they felt uncomfortable since everyone was looking at them – "I don't like being the center of attention." The other two women in the group felt comfortable introducing another person and didn't feel uncomfortable when being introduced.

Everyone expressed that she felt very comfortable in the smaller groups and enjoyed talking and finding out about each other. R1 and S1 were in one group and P1, B1 and K1 made up the second small group. The researcher found B1 to be very precise in the words she used and she used a lot of them. The researcher felt and observed a great deal of energy coming from B1 when she shared her thoughts and feelings with the group. She was one of the women who was very comfortable with the ice-breaker/introduction exercise. K1 seemed, to the researcher, to be the shyest of the group. She did not share as much or as often as the

other women in the group, and seemed to be holding back. Yet she appeared to be very interested and emotionally involved with the discussion of the other group members. The researcher felt and observed P1 as very open to all the women in the group, both in interacting with the others and to their interactions with her. She displayed a great sense of humor and was comfortable with herself. She was the other woman who felt very comfortable during the introduction exercise. R1 was also open and willing to talk and share with the other group members. The researcher felt and observed that she seemed to process data and synthesize information quickly, getting the most out of what was being discussed. S1 seemed, to the researcher, more open and willing to share than K1 but not as open as R1. The researcher felt and observed that S1 was verbal and animated in her interactions with the group.

The researcher explained that to be successful, the group needed to be based on confidentiality and trust among and between the group members, including the researcher. Group members would be unwilling to share personal information unless they felt quite sure they could trust everyone in the group to respect their confidences. Without the personal sharing, group members would not get to know each other, would not develop a relationship with each other, would not serve as a support system for each other, nor would the group members experience personal growth as a result of the group. The researcher stressed that confidentiality and trust were the foundation on which a successful group experience is built.

Next she described the format each of the sessions would follow, beginning with the researcher asking the group members what their feelings were about the previous week's session and if they had used any of the techniques/skills which had been presented during that previous session. The purpose of asking group members to express their feelings about the

previous session is threefold: (1) group members are not ready to deal with significant issues pertaining to their lives away from the group until they first deal with their reactions to one another in the group (Corey & Corey, 1997), (2) it models the behavior of expressing their feelings, and (3) it provides the facilitator with a sense of what worked and what did not work for group members during that session. By asking whether any of the group members had used any of the techniques/skills presented the pervious session, the facilitator determined if the information presented was useful to the women. If there was an indication from their remarks that it was not useful, the facilitator could explore with the group members whether it was due to a lack of interest on the women's part or if the way in which the facilitator had presented it was the problem.

After the group covered the previous session, the facilitator would ask if group members had anything they wanted to share with the group. This sharing is open to whatever topic is important for group members, something currently affecting their lives or just something they had thought, seen, or experienced since the last meeting. Open sharing allows the group members to direct the discussion to things that are important to them. The other group members gave their attention to the speaker and actively listened to what she was saying. This respectful interaction helped to develop trust among the group members and provided an environment of safety and support.

After the open sharing discussion, the researcher presented that night's topic. This presentation would consist of handouts for the group members concerning the topic, a short "lecture" on the topic, and dialog between all group members on the topic. This dialog concerning the topic would be directed by the group members. The dialog could involve

questions about the topic in general or specific parts of the topic, experiences group members have had relevant to the topic, and/or thoughts, concerns, and feelings about the topic. The facilitator would end the presentation by asking if everyone had any final feelings/questions/concerns/thoughts about the topic. This opportunity was provided to group members as another chance to express themselves and be heard by the group before moving on to another subject. The researcher felt that everyone seemed to be open to the flow of the sessions, but that this could have been due to the women not knowing what to expect, resulting in them being open to just about anything she proposed.

The researcher then spoke to the group about journaling. She explained that journal writing was a way for women to record their thoughts, feelings, experiences, or other events. This record could then be used by a woman to: (1) help remember things she wanted to bring up during a group session, (2) provide a format for working through the topics presented during each session, (3) keep a log of what she was experiencing during this time in her life. The researcher did not make journaling a mandatory requirement for group members, however she did suggest and stress that it could benefit them. She told the women that she would remind them each week about doing the journaling. B1 told the facilitator that she was already journaling so it would not be a problem for her.

The group members were told that the last activity of each group session would be the completion of the instruments needed to collect quantitative data on their group experience. The researcher explained that three instruments would be completed at the end of each of the eight sessions. She stated that at the end of the first and eighth sessions the group members would complete an additional measurement. In addition, during the eighth and final session

they would also complete two evaluation forms. There was some concern expressed by the group members about how much time the measurements would take to complete. The researcher explained that it should only take about ten minutes to complete the three measurements that would be taken each session. She further explained that another fifteen minutes would be needed to complete the additional instrument on the first and eighth session evening. The two evaluations that they would complete at the end of the eighth session would add another ten minutes to the time needed to complete all other of forms. The researcher asked if this was a problem or concern for any of the group members. All group members indicated that they were agreeable to completing the measurements and the time that it would take.

When someone is a new member of a group, they can be uncertain about group norms and expected behavior. To help make the group members feel more comfortable, the researcher provided a list of written group norms. Each norm was discussed and the group members agreed to follow the norms listed. In addition to the norms, the handout also contained possible risks members might experience in a group. The facilitator explained that these were potential risks associated with participation in a group-counseling environment. She further explained that they were considered risks because, as group facilitator, she could not control what was said by group members, nor could she guarantee how members would react to the topics and discussion carried out during the group sessions. The researcher stressed that the possibility for the risks existed especially when emotions run high. P1 said that the facilitator could not control what comes out of someone's mouth so there is always the possibility that something negative could happen. R1 said that she believed that as a result

of the researcher having interviewed everyone, there was probably a lesser chance of that happening because the type of woman who may be likely to cause a problem would not have been accepted into the group. The researcher told the group she was very comfortable with everyone in the group and that she did not believe anyone of them would do anything to make the others uncomfortable. A second handout that contained proposed group guidelines was provided to each group member. These guidelines outlined what was expected of the group members and what was expected of the group facilitator. The facilitator asked the members if anyone had concerns about any of the guidelines, or if there were any guidelines that needed to be added to those that had been proposed. Each group member said that she agreed with all of the proposed guidelines and that the group should adopt them for the duration of the group.

The researcher then distributed a Statement of Informed Consent form to each group member. Group members were asked to read the form. The researcher then explained that both the university which the researcher attended, as well as the community college that group members attended, required human subjects participating in research to sign a consent form. The researcher directed the group member's attention to the name and phone number of her committee chairman and advised them they were entitled to contact him with any concerns about the research or the researcher. She explained that each member's participation in the group was voluntary, but that if she did decide she wanted to participate, she must sign a consent form. All five women said they understood the need for the consent forms and each signed a form.

The next topic covered by the facilitator was the concern people sometimes feel about being part of a group, when even with the concern, they really want to participate. These concerns can be based in the group norm of sharing personal information with other group members, who start out as strangers. This is usually based on the belief that the person's experiences, thoughts, actions will be viewed by others as "dumb," "weird," "stupid" or whatever other negative adjective a person can think of. This fear is based on feelings of not being worthy. In this case, not being worthy of other's consideration; not being worthy of being considered important enough for others to care about what they think, feel, or do. The facilitator stated that everyone in the room was worthy of concern, support, and caring and that she felt everyone would do her best to show those considerations to everyone else. She said the big challenge is showing them to ourselves. The facilitator then asked if anyone wanted to share any fears they might have with the group. Several group members said they didn't think they had any fears. R1 stated she did not think she had any concerns/fears because she knew ahead of time (from the interview) what to expect and came prepared to share and get to know everyone. B1 agreed that the interview prepared her for what the group was about and she said she was comfortable that the researcher would not have approved anyone to be in the group that was not willing to be open and participate as the rest of them were. K1 said she had always been willing to sit back and let others talk. She was concerned at times about if what she has to say was worthy of other's consideration, but not here in the group. She said she felt comfortable because we were all here for the same reason and she was looking forward to the support of everyone. The facilitator asked if anyone had any hopes and/or expectations about the group in general or about what they wanted to get out of the

group. The one answer agreed to by all was the support of other women. P1, R1, and S1 agreed that the support of other women was both a hope and an expectation. B1 said that the support was very important to her but so was taking this time for herself. She said she has only been married for eight months and she and her husband are together all the time. After being by herself for so long, she feels suffocated and needs time away from him. She also shared the pain of losing her mother a few years ago. She and her mother had been very close; she called her mother her best friend. She felt she wanted and needed the support of women who were also coming back to school. The college experience was new to her and she wanted to use this class to ease into the college routine. K1 added that she wanted the support of other women and also felt this Student Development class was much better suited to her than any of the others offered at the community college because of that support.

The researcher presented the rationale behind her development of the personal-growth support group. Her rationale included: (1) citations of some of the research which indicates how important support is for returning women students, (2) her desire to complete a project that was "real world" and beneficial to women, (3) an awareness of how few specific support/programs there are for the mature woman student in the local community college, and (4) the desire for her doctoral project to be something personally meaningful since she would be "living" with it for one to two years. The researcher than asked the group members if any of them would like to share her personal goals with the group. Several members indicated that just establishing a support network of like-minded women was their main goal. R1 said she was glad that the one of the session topics was Study Skills since she would like to improve hers. S1 indicated that this area would benefit her as well.

The researcher explained to the group that the experts on groups indicate that there needs to be an individual determination as to whether one feels the group is a safe place. She will then be open and willing to share, engage other members and provide feedback. This feeling of safety comes from the individual's awareness and belief that the confidentiality of the group will be maintained and that the other group members are open, caring and supportive of everyone in the group. This translates into the willingness to be open because she will not, intentionally, be hurt. The researcher stated that it sometimes took a couple of weeks of the group meeting for this feeling of safety to occur. She asked the group if they had any comments or questions about this. B1 said she felt safe and comfortable with the group already, and she was ready to go. P1 agreed with her. K1, S1 and R1 all said they felt very comfortable and safe with everyone.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. This was the first session for the group so each member was asked to complete four instruments. These instruments included: (1) the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, (2) the General Self-Efficacy Scale, (3) Beck's Anxiety Inventory, and (4) the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of each of the instruments and reminded the group that they would be given the first three of the four measurements each week for completion. The researcher reminded the group members that this was the means she would be using to collect quantitative data for her doctoral project. All of the group members seemed to go through the measurements quickly and did not seem to perceive a problem in completing these instruments each week. After everyone had completed the four

measurements, the researcher told the group members that that was everything for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. All of the group members seemed anxious and excited about meeting again the next week. B1 and S1 said they were really looking forward to Thursdays from now on. The group members discussed where everyone was parked and made sure there were at least two women walking out to the parking lot together. They asked about waiting for the researcher but were told that she was in the faculty lot and would be fine. She reflected on how comfortable everyone was with each other after just one session. She felt that if the group members continued to be this open and supportive of each other that the group would be successful and rewarding for everyone involved. She thought back to her feelings of anxiety as she waited for the group members to arrive earlier in the evening, but realized once she felt how comfortable they were with each other, she too relaxed. She was very excited and happy about how the evening had gone.

Session 2: The researcher arrived for the second session of the personal-growth support group to find P1 had arrived before her and had set the six chairs in a circle and pushed the desk back against the wall. The setting of the session was the same as the first. The room was still dingy, and the air conditioning made it cold. All five group members arrived to participate in the session.

The researcher asked the group members what their feelings were about the session last week. Everyone agreed that they had enjoyed meeting everyone. S1 said she enjoyed the "ice breaker" exercise. She really liked talking one-on-one with R1 and getting to know her. She felt she and R1 had made a personal connection while they talked so it was like introducing a new friend to the rest of the group. S1 indicated that this was a new "ice

breaker" to her, and that she liked it. Everyone else said they enjoyed last week and were happy to be back tonight.

The researcher asked the group members if anyone had anything they wanted to share with the group before beginning the night's topic. Everyone said they didn't have anything at this time. The researcher then distributed a handout on communication skills to the group members. She began by talking about four listening skills: (1) Disarming Technique-finding some truth in what the other person is saying; (2) Empathy-trying to see the world through the other person's eyes; (3) Inquiry-asking gentle, probing questions to learn more about what they are thinking and feeling; (4) Reflecting-conveying the essence of what the other person has communicated to ensure you "heard" what they "said". Next she covered three self-expression skills: (1) "I" Statements-expressing your feelings with "I" statements so the other person does not feel attacked; (2) Express Yourself-don't expect others to read your mind, clearly state your wishes and needs as preferences, not commands; and (3) Reinforce Your Needs (also called Stroking)-reinforce the other person to give you what you want by describing the positive consequences for the other person. The researcher talked about Active Listening and how challenging it can be because of the roadblocks people put up without even realizing what they are doing. Many people don't really listen or listen with "half" an ear while formulating what they are going to say back to the person once they stop talking. This usually means a person did not hear and/or understand all that the speaker was saying. People can be overly concerned about their role or how they will look to the other person, or they can be judging and evaluating without putting themselves in the other person's place. Active listening is "really" listening and concentrating on what the person is saying, checking back in

with the person when they have stopped talking to ensure you "heard" what they said/meant. The facilitator also talked about nonverbal language and how important it was for the verbal language being used to match the nonverbal language of the person. If the two do not match there is something being hidden. This incongruity could be mentioned to the individual and used to question the person to get at their true feelings. B1 said the use of "I" statements had really worked for her. It allowed her feelings to be known to the other person so they could know/understand why she was upset. By not verbally attacking the other person, she was able to discuss the problem more calmly and come to a resolution. S1 said she had never really thought about how another person was receiving what she said and that how she said it could change what she really meant. This was a new concept to S1 and very gratifying for the researcher to present an idea that was new and useful to her. A couple of the group members said they liked the idea of role playing something they wanted to talk about with someone ahead of time. By "trying on" the words and the way they said them, they could be better prepared to get their view across. R1 mentioned how hard it can be to remember some of these techniques when you are angry or upset, when your emotions seem to take over. Everyone agreed with her. The researcher suggested that the first step was awareness. By being aware that you want to be heard and that by using some of the techniques the group had discussed, a person had a better chance to remember. The researcher stated that it takes practice. A person might not think of the techniques until after an argument, but by practicing whenever they do remember to use them, it then becomes a good habit. Once the good habit is formed the person will then remember before getting angry and be able to use the techniques to avoid an argument while being heard. The researcher sensed the personalities of

the group members coming out during the discussion among group members. P1 was very strong and sure of herself and her beliefs. B1 was very articulate and seemed to talk quite a bit during the session. K1 was the quietest of the group members but was willing to share and participate. R1 seemed to have a strong sense of self that seemed to be recently discovered and was growing. S1 shared with the group during the discussion that she had been sober for four years and had basically given up all her friends – since they all still drank. She was to move during the next two weeks into an apartment located in the same city as the community college. She said she was looking forward to her move since it would be closer to work, school and her family. She expressed her happiness at finding some new friends in the group members who had her best interest at heart. The four other group members expressed their happiness to provide S1 with friendship. R1 told S1 that she thought she was very brave to share this with the group. The other group members agreed.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. Everyone completed the three measurements and turned them into the researcher. She then told everyone that that was all for the evening and that she would see everyone next Thursday. The group members gathered up their belongings while talking to each other. B1 said she was really enjoying the sessions and looked forward to next Thursday night. P1 asked where everyone was parked and they arranged to walk to the parking lot together. The researcher gathered up her belongings as the group members called out their good-byes. She thought about how quickly the trust had been established in the group as evidenced by S1's willingness to share her alcoholism, and how supportive the other group members were to acknowledge her bravery.

Session 3: The researcher arrived at the meeting room to find P1 had arrived before her and had placed six chairs in a circle and pushed the instructor desk against the wall. During this third session only four of the group members were present, P1, K1, R1, and B1. S1 had called the researcher earlier in the day. S1 had sounded very sick and miserable on the phone. She said she was really sick with the flu and would not be able to attend the session tonight. She asked me to tell everyone she was sorry she could not make it. The researcher passed S1's remarks on to the other group members. Everyone was concerned about S1 and supportive in their wishes for her healing. K1 remembered S1 was supposed to move at the beginning of next week and wondered out loud if she would be well enough to do this.

The researcher asked the group members what their feelings were about the previous week's session. P1 and R1 said they had used the "I" statements when talking to their partners during the past week. They both indicated that they really liked the outcome. Each was able to use the technique to get across their feelings while not starting an argument. B1 said she has used this technique for quite sometime and finds it empowering. She feels it is one of the best ways to make herself heard.

The researcher distributed an eleven-page handout she had designed plus three handouts that the community college counseling center had available for students. These three counseling center handouts were titled: Study Skills, Test Taking, and Time Management. The researcher started the discussion by talking about the study environment that works best for each individual. The researcher's handout provided group members with a short questionnaire to help them discover their personal preferences for a study environment. Next the group talked about reading and remembering. This included the types of clues

students can use from their textbooks to help identify what is important, and tips about how to remember what they have read. Time management is very important but not usually considered a study skill. The researcher talked about identifying how each student's time was currently spent and how it could be better utilized. The handout included a Term Planning Calendar sheet, Daily Schedule sheet, and a Priority Tasks sheet. This provided each member with a sample of types of time management tools that might be helpful to them. There was a discussion on how to best use class time including note taking tips. Writing papers and test taking were the last two areas covered and the two areas on which group members wanted information. The areas presented for writing papers included: basic rules, organizational approaches, the FRY Paper-writing System, and questions to ask when reviewing a rough draft. Under the topic of test taking, the group discussed the three main types of tests (multiple-choice, true/false, and essay) and how to best approach each type.

A considerable amount of material was covered during the third session but the four group members seemed interested in all of the material. R1 was truly interested in the environmental information. She said she really hadn't thought about the time and place for the best studying but that she was going to think about all the information the group had covered and make some changes in her study environment at home. P1 and B1 both agreed that the idea of sitting in the front of the class room was important to them to ensure they were able to hear, and see the instructor. The facilitator also talked about the importance of discovering whether an individual is an audio learner, verbal learner, or combination of the two. Once a person has this information regarding themselves, they can determine the best way to study and take notes (i.e., tape record class, use pictures to represent concepts, etc.).

Time management seems to be a "hot" topic for everyone in the group, but, considering how much everyone in the group has to do, this wasn't surprising. B1 said she is a compulsive list maker and uses a planning calendar and "to do" lists. K1 and P1 said they also use a planner but not to the extent that B1 does. The test taking and paper writing topics were of interest to all of the group members but the researcher did not get a sense about how much of the information will be helpful to them. They took in all the information but they did not have much discussion on these areas except to say that both writing papers and taking tests cause great anxiety for them.

In addition to the session topic, the group also talked about menopause symptoms, remedies for these symptoms and books that might provide information of interest to group members. The facilitator did not remember how the group got to the topic of menopause but it generated a lot of discussion. B1 had an "ah ha" experience and got very excited because she said this could be the reason for many of the different things that she has been experiencing lately. P1 and the researcher shared stories of people they knew and what their own personal experiences had been. The researcher told the group members she would bring in several books she has on menopause next week. They would be free to borrow these books during the week. The researcher also distributed the Kiersey Types Sorter as something each member could complete, on their own, if they were interested in discovering their "type" as it relates to the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. She also said she would bring in books on "type" that they could borrow to gather more information for themselves, about themselves.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to discuss. Since everyone said no, she then distributed the instruments. After everyone had completed the three measurements she told them that was it for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. After all the group members had left the room, the researcher reflected on the evening. R1 had participated as she had the past two sessions. K1 had talked a little more this evening than she had in the past, while P1 had had quite a lot to say. The researcher found it interesting that the three women in their forties (P1, B1 and the researcher) were the ones involved in the menopause discussion, yet the thirty-something women were truly listening to the discussion, just not contributing. She felt it was another successful session.

Session 4: P1 had arrived before the researcher and had set six chairs in a circle and pushed the desk back against the wall. The researcher used the instructor desk to display the books she had brought to lend to the group members. All five group members arrived and after putting down all of their belongings went straight to the display of books. There was a great deal of discussion about each of the books and what type of information it contained. The researcher talked about personality types and how it helped people know themselves better while also understanding types other than themselves. This knowledge could then be used to help them understand and deal with other people more effectively. The display also contained books concerning menopause and health. After the researcher described the contents of several different books, the women chose the book(s) they would borrow for the week. Everyone found at least one book of interest to her and also identified books for next week.

The researcher started the session by asking the group members how they felt about the topic covered during last week's session. R1 shared that she decided to make and take time to study when she was at home alone during the day. She ignored the chores, laundry, vacuuming, etc. and cleaned up her desk so she had a good space in which to study. She said that after making these few changes she felt like she had been able to accomplish more and better understood the material she covered. By making a conscious decision to designate that time as study time, she didn't feel guilty about not doing the housework. S1 told everyone she was sorry she missed last week's session. She said she was feeling much better and that her family had helped her move into her new apartment over the weekend. She appeared very happy and much better emotionally. Everyone told her that they had missed her last week and that they were happy she was better and that she had moved. P1 asked us for our prayers on behalf of her mother who was to have a mastectomy the following week. Everyone expressed her concern and told P1 that we would keep her mother in our prayers.

The researcher distributed a three-page handout with information concerning goal setting. The first page was entitled: "You Can Have Anything You Want-You Just Can't Have Everything You Want". This information was from a favorite book of the researcher, You Can't Afford the Luxury of a Negative Thought by Roger & McWilliams. This book describes the concept of positive thinking, how to focus on your goals and do the work required to accomplish the goals people have set for themselves. The next page of the handout contained goal-setting hints which included: (1) be realistic when you set goals, (2) be realistic about your expectations, (3) don't give up too early, (4) concentrate on areas that offer the best chance for improvement, and (5) monitor your achievements and keep resetting

your goals. The final page of the handout was a Success Map. This visual tool can assist people in: (1) setting a goal, (2) defining the steps necessary to achieve the goal, (3) identifying the people who can help with achieving your goal, (4) determining the people or things that may present obstacles in your path, and (5) recognizing what things may be needed to help achieve your goal. The researcher also talked about the idea of using relaxation techniques and guided imagery to help visualize obtaining goals. People in sports have used this technique for a number of years. She explained the full body muscle tensing and relaxing technique as a way a woman could prepare herself for visualization. She stated that many companies sold tapes to assist with visualization if a person felt they could not accomplish the desired results on their own. The researcher suggested that a person could prepare her own tape by recording the image she wanted to use in her visualization. This tape could then be played after using the relaxation technique.

There was a great deal of discussion on the idea of positive thinking. B1 said she totally and completely believes in the power of positive thinking and that it works for her. P1 agreed it was the best way to see the good in life and stay happy but she wasn't as enthusiastic as B1. K1 and R1 both said that they have several books on affirmations and sayings to help them see the positive instead of the negative. R1 said that the other technique she used was to write down, on post-it pad paper ideas, affirmations, or sayings that were relevant to her and her life. She would then stick the papers up around the house so that as she did her housework she would see them, read them, and get a lift from them. S1 said the idea of positive thinking having power to make you happy was something new to her. She said she had been living and thinking negatively for so long that when she tries to be positive she feels

like she's faking it. R1 said she understood this because when she first started changing the way she thought about things she felt this way also. But she told S1 that by finding some tiny thing that she was happy about or saw as something good, that she could then feel more genuine about concentrating on positive thoughts even if she wasn't completely convinced of them. By starting that way she soon found that she felt happier more often and that if she wasn't feeling happy she could change the way she felt and become happier. The researcher added that negative thinking usually is connected to a negative personal belief system. The good news is that since it is a belief, it can be changed. If S1 can try catching herself when she is thinking negatively to then consciously change her thinking into something positive, she will be practicing the technique. Continued practice will turn positive thinking into a habit rather than something that needs to be practiced to be remembered. If S1 were interested in changing and practicing, the researcher explained, she would see a difference. Besides, what did she have to lose except negative thoughts! The group members discussed the concepts and areas highlighted on the Success Map. However, this did not seem to be something they were really interested in using. The researcher explained that how we think about ourselves and our goals will have an impact on whether we reach a goal. The achievement of a goal helps us to think more positively, which in turn makes us set more goals. A positive cycle is started and kept going.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. After everyone had completed the three measurements she told them that was it for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. Everyone told P1 that their prayers were with her, her family,

and Mother. The group members talked to each other as they gathered up their belongings and left for their cars, shouting their good nights to the researcher and saying they would see her next week.

The researcher gathered the left over books from the table and reflected about the session. The mood of the participants and the session were very good this evening. The positive thinking part of the session seemed to be of the most interest to the group members. Everyone shared stories and examples of how positive thinking had helped them. Those who were using this technique felt it was very important to help them deal with the stress they are under as a result of the different roles they have in their lives. The discussion on menopause was really good as well. Even though three of the women were twenty years from the age when most women experience menopause, they were still interested. They asked questions and really listened to the discussion. The researcher felt that menopause would be a good addition to the list of topics covered in this type of group. Everyone was really involved in the discussion and enjoyed the evening.

Session 5: The researcher was first to arrive at the meeting room. She arranged five chairs in a circle and pushed the instructor desk against the wall. She placed a number of books on the instructor desk as group members arrived. Once B1, K1, R1, and S1 were seated, she told them that P1 had called earlier and explained that her mother's surgery had gone well. However, P1 was exhausted and was going to bed and would not be at the session this evening.

The researcher asked the group members if anyone would like to share her feelings about last week's session. B1 said she was so happy, excited, and relieved that because of last

week's session she had a name for what she had been experiencing. She said her sister had mentioned a month or so ago that maybe B1 was starting to have pre-menopausal symptoms but that she didn't accept that explanation at that time. She was very grateful that she had borrowed the book Silent Passage last week, because it explained everything she had been experiencing. She said she had shared passages from the book with her sister and that her sister confirmed and supported the information about which she had been reading. S1 mentioned that she really enjoyed the book she had borrowed on personality types. She said it was very interesting and it described her so accurately! K1 said the same about the trait book she had borrowed.

The topic presented during this session was identifying and stopping negative thoughts. The researcher had touched on this topic last week. The reaction by group members was one of identification. Every group member acknowledged this as a challenge, but felt it was worthwhile to live a happier life. The researcher distributed a six-page handout, which provided a list of six techniques that could be used to identify and stop the negative thoughts a person might like to change. The researcher also talked about Dr. Ellis' theory/therapy called Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) or as it is sometimes referred to, the A-B-C of emotion. His idea was that negative thoughts/beliefs, and not what actually happens, are what make a person feel upset. "A" stands for the actual event, "B" for the person's belief, and "C" is the consequence of the event and belief to the person. By identifying the underlying negative belief and changing that belief, Ellis believes a person can deal with events in a positive, healthy way and be a happier person as a result. One page of the handout provided a list of cognitive distortions (the same or similar to Ellis' beliefs) to

help the group members identify areas where their own personal beliefs may be faulty or negative. A sample mood log was also provided for those who wanted to keep track of their moods in an effort to help identify areas of negativity.

R1 said she had started doing identification of her negative thoughts a few years ago, but didn't know at that time that it had a "name". She gave examples of when she was feeling depressed and negative about a lot of what was happening in her life. But she said she got tired of being tired. She started reading inspiration books and trying to change her mood when she would realize she was thinking negatively. Once she started changing her mood/thoughts, she realized she was feeling better more often. The feeling good and the realization that she had control over her moods gave her confidence and the incentive to keep doing it. B1 related that she had always been a fairly positive person and had used some of these techniques without knowing they were techniques. She said she tries to be the "identifier" for people around her who are thinking or believing in a negative manner. S1 shared with the group members that she had operated in the negative most of her life. K1 said that this was true for her as well. They each "knew" that they "should" be happier and more positive, but they just kind of let the negative get to them. They said they would try some of these techniques to see if they worked for them. The group also talked more about the power of positive thinking and how the negative in our lives can translate into illness. This is the concept of mind/body connection. The researcher gave the group members a brief summary of the Caroline Myss book, Anatomy of the Spirit. She also mentioned two other books that deal with these topics, You Can't Afford the Luxury of a Negative Thought and Your Body Believes Every Word You Say. The researcher felt it was interesting to note that two of the

women were aware of these concepts and two weren't. The discussion among the researcher and two women who were aware seemed to make an impression on the two women who were not aware. The researcher also covered the STOP! Technique and saving negative thinking for a special time. She related her own experience of becoming more aware of when, where, and how she was participating in negative thinking. The quicker she could identify that she was thinking negatively the quicker she was able to change her thinking. This helped her negative thinking time period to become shorter, resulting in her becoming happier due to the longer positive thinking periods of time.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. After everyone had completed the three measurements she told them that was it for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. The women gathered up their belongings and started for the parking lot, shouting their good nights to the researcher. As she gathered up the books not borrowed, she reflected on the wonderful discussion that went on this evening. She felt that S1 seemed to be absorbing all the information going on around her like a sponge. The idea that S1 could: (1) change her feelings about the events in her life, (2) that some of her beliefs were the cause of some of the negativity in her life, and (3) that she could change her negative beliefs to positive beliefs, just "blew her away." She will probably spend a lot of time thinking about this session over the next week. ANOTHER great night!

Session 6: P1 had arrived before the researcher and had set the six chairs in a circle and pushed the desk back against the wall. K1, R1 and S1 arrived and asked how P1's mother was doing. P1 said she was doing fine, so well in fact that she was driving P1 crazy.

The researcher told the group members that B1's husband had called her earlier in the day and told her today was B1's birthday. He asked if it would be okay for B1 to miss tonight's session so he could take her out to dinner to celebrate. The researcher had told him that as long as it was okay with B1 it was okay with her. Everyone was really tickled about B1's husband calling and getting her out of class. The researcher told the group that his tone had been very serious and intense on the phone and she felt like he was really looking forward to making it a special night for B1

The researcher asked if anyone wanted to share her feelings about last week's session. There was some discussion about how interesting and helpful last week's session was for everyone. S1 shared that she had really worked on changing her normal negative attitude into a positive one. She talked about waking up during the past week feeling kind of down and dreading the day ahead. As a result of last week, instead of going with those thoughts she stopped and tried to think of something in her day to look forward to. She went from that thought to something else positive and so on. She said by the time she left for work she was feeling happier and more upbeat and that she had a good day at work. She was surprised and very pleased with how it worked. K1 shared with the group members the frustration she was having with a woman at work. The woman seems to be normal except for the fact that she acts as if she doesn't know how to do the things most people do. K1 said that she acts like this even if the topic has been explained to her before, sometimes as many as five times. K1 has tried to be positive and helpful but the woman just, "doesn't get it," no matter what "it" is! K1 indicated that trying to be positive had not worked because this woman really got to her. K1 said she was going to continue to try to be positive around this woman. R1 gave P1

a quick summary of what we had covered last week so P1 would have an idea of what everyone was talking about.

The researcher distributed a twenty-nine page handout to the group members. The first five pages of the handout were taken from Louise Hayes' book, The Power is Within You. The rest of the handout was taken from Caroline Myss' book, Anatomy of the Spirit. The group discussed the concept that the only thing a person could really control was their thinking. We can't control anyone else, yet we sometimes let others control us. By allowing others to have control over our thoughts and feelings, we are giving our personal power away. If we decide that we can't be happy unless "he" does certain things, we have given our power to him. We can take back our personal power by making ourselves happy and not depending on others to do it for us. If we have routinely given our power to others and now we decide to take it back and keep it, we need to realize that this will cause the others to be upset. People get used to controlling others and don't like it when they can no longer have that control. Everyone had examples of times they had given their power to others. The researcher then talked about Myss' principles of personal power. Her first principle is - biography becomes biology. This is the idea that "what we experience/think/do has an effect on our body. These actions/thoughts enter our system as energy. This energy produces biological responses that are stored in our cellular memory. In this way our biographies are woven into our biological systems, gradually, slowly, every day. Power is essential for healing and for maintaining health. Attitudes that generate a feeling of powerlessness not only lead to low self-esteem, but also deplete the physical body of energy and weaken overall health." This leads to the second principle – "Personal power is necessary for health. Power is at the

root of the human experience. Our attitudes and belief patterns, whether positive or negative, are all extensions of how we define, use, or do not use power. Not one of us is free from power issues. Many people who lose something that represents power to them (money, job, a game or who lose someone in whom their sense of self or power is vested) develop a disease. Our relationship to power is at the core of our health. People need to become conscious of what gives you power." The third principle – you alone can help yourself heal. "Healing is an active and internal process that includes investigating one's attitudes, memories, and beliefs with the desire to release all negative patterns that prevent one's full emotional and spiritual recovery. This internal review leads one to review one's external circumstances in an effort to recreate one's life in a way that serves activation of will: (1) the will to see and accept truths about ones' life and how one has used one's energies; and (2) the will to begin to use energy for the creation of love, self-esteem, and health. It is not the mind but our emotional needs that control our attachment to our power targets." People who feel they must acquire power from the external environment and from or though someone else have given their power away. By using the internal review cited above, we become aware that we have to make some new choices/changes. "The necessity of change makes healing a terrifying experience for many people. These individuals know that unplugging their energy circuits from a power target is the same as saying good-bye to it. Healing requires taking action. It is not a passive event." Myss goes on to describe power as the life force. "From the time we are young, we test ourselves and our capacity to learn what and who has power, to attract power, and to use power. Through these childhood exercises we discover whether we have what it takes to draw power to ourselves. If we do, we begin to dream of what we would like to accomplish

as adults. If we decide that we are unable to attract the life force, however, we begin living in a type of "power debt." We imagine ourselves surviving only through the energies of other people, but not on our own." I also covered Myss' four stages of personal power: (1) revolution, (2) involution, (3) narcissism, and (4) evolution.

S1 shared that she had given away her power for most of her life. All of her relationships with men were prime examples. She said she had done everything in the living space, making sure the man was comfortable and happy. She paid for most everything, food to rent. She made sure he had cigarettes and beer and that they did whatever he wanted to do. She thought that was just the way it was done, always giving, never keeping anything for herself. But she was now trying to keep her power. She was living alone for the first time in her life, and getting used to it. She was starting to treat herself to things she had always wanted and keeping her time for herself and her happiness. She said it was hard and lonely at times but she feels it was worth it to get "herself" (power) back. R1 talked about being raised to believe that a woman took care of her family and deferred to her husband. She had accepted this as the way it was yet she wasn't happy with this arrangement. Once she started to read inspirational books and discover more about herself she realized she had more control over her life than she had once believed. She said she didn't call it taking back her personal power but that is what she did, and it is worth it. K1 said she had always been the quiet one and that it was just easier to let others have their way, at home, with her friends, or at work. But she also has realized that she is not happy in some of these relationships and has started taking her power back, especially at work and in her personal relationships. This topic seemed to have the biggest impact on P1. She made the connection between keeping/taking

her power and the using of "I" statements when talking to people with whom she is in relationship. She sees her tendency to get angry and yell, thus giving her power to others. They are in control of her feelings and responses at this point. She said she isn't going to let people do that any more. She said she only has so much life force and she doesn't plan on giving it away to others. She is really excited about this.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. After everyone had completed the three measurements she told them that was it for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. Everyone packed up her belongings, said good-night and headed for the parking lot. The researcher decided that this topic had been of great interest to everyone. There had been a lot of discussion, sharing and questions. All of the group members were able to tie this topic with last week's topic of negative thinking as both cause and effect of giving away their personal power. This was definitely P1's main "gem" from the topics presented. It was hard for the researcher to believe there were only two more sessions left before the group would be ending. She felt that some of the information she was providing the group members was really having an impact on their thinking. This was very exciting and satisfying for her.

Session 7: P1 had arrived at the meeting room before anyone else and had set the six chairs in a circle and pushed the desk back against the wall. All of the group members arrived and everyone wished B1 a belated Happy Birthday and asked how her special evening had gone. She said she and her husband had a great meal (he cooked) and a quiet, relaxing evening. P1 said her mother was doing fine and that she was still very excited about the

personal power topic we talked about last week. She said she had an incident during the past week that would have normally caused her to get angry and yell and be upset for a day or two. But instead, she decided to keep her power and not let it ruin her day. She dealt with what she could and let the rest go. She said it felt good to not waste her time and energy being angry.

The researcher distributed a seven-page handout from Sarah Ban Breathnach's book, Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort & Joy. She opened the discussion with the observation that most women have trouble or find it a challenge to perform truly good self-care. Women don't treat themselves as well as they do their friends or, in some cases, as well as they treat their acquaintances. They learn to take care of others, but not themselves. Doing things for themselves is viewed as selfish in our society. Yet, if women were to take care of themselves they would have more energy to be able to take care of others. Breathnach talks about creating a sacred space of our own where we can meditate, pray or just relax. She also talks about creating a hope chest, toy box and comfort drawer. "The hope chest is a place to store things you hope to do in the future (like fabric for a Thanksgiving tablecloth and napkins; antique needlepoint squares to be made into pillows). It is a symbolical place for our hopes and dreams. Playing is hard for most women. Creating a toy box of your own symbolically suggests the importance of fun if you are to function at full throttle. Life requires that we prepare ourselves for the inevitable times that try our souls. This is achieved with a comfort drawer. Comfort drawers are for those nights when you feel as if you'd like to pull the covers over your head and never come out. It is a stockpile of small indulgences like: box of chocolate truffles; miniature cordials and after-dinner drinks; aromatherapy bath treatment;

velvet herbal sleeping pillow; rose-scented bubble bath; old love letters; unusual teas, etc. Notice the pattern of pleasure? Here is all that is required for the spoiling and pampering of a world-weary woman. When outfitting your comfort drawer, be sure to line it with a lovely floral shelf paper and tuck in some scented sachets so that the drawer will delight your senses. Wrap your comforts in pretty jewel-colored tissue paper and tie them with beautiful ribbons. This way, when you open your drawer, you'll see a dazzling array of wonderful presents-gifts of the heart for the most deserving person you know."

The other areas in the handout included: (1) Self-Nurturing: The hardest task you'll ever do; (2) What do you like about yourself?; (3) Carving out time for personal pursuits that bring contentment; (4) Neglect not the gifts within you; and (5) Snatch stolen moments of solitude. P1 and B1 both said they do self-care things all the time. Two group members said they never did self-care, and one said she sometimes did self-care things, but not often enough. We talked about other types of things we could do that could be considered self-care. These included getting a massage or other "spa" treatments; taking time to just sit, think and be still; learning to say "no"; and doing things to keep healthy so we have more energy to deal with everything and everyone in our lives. S1 said that in the past she never did self-care type things, but that she is learning. For example, she just bought herself a feather bed, duvet & pillows with satin sheets. She also makes sure she has a manicure each week. Everyone except S1 said she had their own toys. P1 and B1 said they had several on their desks at work. R1 said she had a boss who wouldn't let her have her toys on her desk but she just moved them inside her desk. K1 said she collects Garfield statues as her toy of choice.

Everyone agreed that a massage was worthwhile self-care and a great gift from a friend or husband.

The researcher asked if there was anything else anyone would like to bring up. Since everyone said no, she moved on to the distribution of the measurements. After everyone had completed the three measurements she told them that was it for this evening and that she would see them next Thursday. Everyone gathered their belongings, put on their coats, said their good nights, and started for the parking lot. The researcher decided that this evening's session had had a "fun" feel to it, which was very appropriate considering the topic. P1 and B1 were ahead of the rest of the group members in taking care of themselves. S1 seems to be in a much happier and calmer condition than when the group started. Next week was to be the last regular meeting of the group. The time had gone by quickly.

Session 8: P1 arrived before the researcher and set the six chairs in a circle and pushed the desk back against the wall. After all group members had arrived, P1 said that all week she thought about the discussion last week concerning toys. She felt that it wasn't right for S1 to not have any toys, so she brought her a Taco Bell talking dog. S1 was really touched and everyone loved it and P1 for doing it. The mood in the room was one of excitement and everyone seemed " wound up". Several members said they did not want the group to end. The researcher told them she wanted to set up a follow-up meeting in 3-4 weeks so she could see what their thoughts were after a few weeks of not having sessions. Everyone decided this should take place on December 10 at 7 PM at the local Olive Garden restaurant.

The researcher requested that each group member share her feelings and thoughts about: (1) what she liked about the group, (2) what she didn't like, (3) what she would change, (4) what goals she had reached, and (5) her overall feeling about this group experience.

S1: "It was a really positive experience and I have gotten a lot out of it." She said the topics and information were useful because it was "where I am in my life." She said she felt more peaceful, confident (her goal), and positive as a result of the Group.

P1: "I really enjoyed the group." She recommended that if the researcher facilitated another group that it should be kept small, with no more than 10 women. She said the closeness made this group more effective and better for the participants, at least in her view. She also commented that everyone in the group had been touched or affected by alcohol in some way and that it worked as a common bond, a common ground of experience with which each could identify. She said she felt comfortable with everyone very quickly and that was a surprise. She said the researcher might want to consider adding a woman's health section that covers menopause, stress and exercise and also more about the personality types.

B1: "When I first talked to the researcher she mentioned that two of the other group members were thirty-two years old. At the time I wondered how a thirty-two year old would be able to relate to a mature woman returning to school?" But once she met everyone and had shared information, she realized that even thirty year olds had experienced many of the same things as those in their forties. She felt that the two

age groups could relate very well to each other. She was very thankful for the books and information on menopause and thought it would be a great addition to the topics covered in a group of this type. Her goal was to become an active part of a support group with like-minded women and she felt she had achieved this.

K1: "I really enjoyed the topics and discussion." She said she would have enjoyed more information on the personality types and thought it would have been beneficial for everyone. She said she reached her goals of meeting and making friends with more women who were experiencing many of the same things as she.

R1: "At first I felt guilty taking the time to come to the sessions because I was leaving my kids alone until my husband arrived home." But once she relaxed she realized that by taking this time for herself she was really a better parent because she felt better, happier, and was better able to deal with all the stuff. She said she really liked the idea of rewording, like using "I" statements when communicating with her husband. She also appreciated the techniques for identifying and stopping negative thoughts. She said she realized not everything she learned would work every time but that it was important to know about the skills and techniques so she could use them if she needed them. She also appreciated the information and books on menopause. It was something she had never thought much about, but she was now going to do some reading so that she would be aware and prepared for when the time comes. She also found the study skills useful. She had joined the group to share and learn with other women and felt that was what she had done.

P1: "The study skills were not useful to me, but the personal power and life force concepts were extremely important to me. I will never again let anyone take my life force from me."

The researcher then asked each group member to share her impressions of the first night of the group. The general discussion indicated that the introduction to what would happen each week was good and that everyone really seemed to be listening. They were surprised at how soon S1 had opened up about being sober and B1 talking about her mother. This helped to make everyone more comfortable because S1 and B1 had trusted the other group members. Everyone said that they enjoyed laughing together. Each group member also shared her specific thought about that first night:

B1: "I wanted to get started and was curious about who else was here."

K1: "I was afraid to talk. I don't like speaking in public, but I was interested in the topics to be covered."

P1: "I figured B1 was crazy; K1 too quiet; R1 was interesting and involved. But I couldn't get a read on S1, I didn't know what she would do."

R1: "I thought P1 was funny and I liked the idea that we were here to share knowledge and learn that everyone has choices."

S1: "I was anxious, curious, and felt positive about the group."

The researcher asked what was personally the most important thing covered during the group:

P1: "Life force and personal power."

S1: " Self care."

R1: " Study skills and irrational thoughts."

B1: " Menopause."

K1: "Personal power and irrational thoughts."

S1: "I bought myself a new sports car – how's that for self-care!"

The researcher ended the session by asking the group members to complete the four measurements. Everyone completed the paperwork and gave it back to the researcher. At this point there were more comments about missing the group members and actually getting together each week. All the group members exchanged hugs and promises to stay in touch. The researcher reminded everyone about the follow-up meeting on the tenth of December. The women said good-bye and thanked the researcher, saying they would see her in a few weeks. As she gathered her belongings she reviewed the events of the evening. B1 had been quieter tonight. B1 had shared that her brother had been in a car accident that morning and that he was going to have to have surgery. K1 talked more tonight than she had in all of the eight weeks. R1 talked about how at first she felt guilty but really thought the group helped her become a better parent. P1 was in a great mood, she didn't want the group to end, and she was very excited about the life force concept. Everyone was sorry to see the group end but said they realized that the researcher needed the time to finish her research. They were all looking forward to meeting for dinner in December. The researcher was very happy that the group had gone so well and that everyone seemed to have gotten so much out of it. She had learned a lot from each one of the group members and was very grateful for their help and support.

Follow-up Session: The group met at the local Olive Garden restaurant. They were seated in the middle of the back wall of a large center dining room at a table for six. The table

was a long rectangle set for six people, two on each side and one on each end. Most of the surrounding tables were occupied. The restaurant was large and busy so it took some time for the six women to all get together. Everyone was happy to see each other. Hugs were exchanged among the six women. Once the food and drink orders had been given, the researcher asked for some feedback about their group experience now that they had had three weeks on which to reflect:

P1: "I am still using many of the techniques and ideas we covered during the group. I had been looking forward to tonight because I missed seeing everyone. The most important thing I have gotten from the group is the idea of taking back and keeping my personal power." She related two incidents that had happened over the past week to indicate how she had changed the way she deals with her family to ensure she keeps her power. She also recommended that the researcher use a tape recorder the next time she facilitates this group to ensure that there would not be the concern over the large amount of information which needed to be collected.

S1: "I learned so much from the group and I'm still using much of the information daily." She said she also had been looking forward to tonight. She related that she was using "I" statements to let people know her feelings and what she wanted. She shared a story about a woman at work who was making her upset and angry. Everyone gave her some feedback on things she might want to try so she doesn't give this woman her power. She said other than that, she feels she is much more positive in her outlook and that this will be the first Christmas where she feels really good

physically and mentally. She said it wouldn't have been possible without everyone at the table.

R1: "I am still using some of the things I learned from the group. Keeping my personal power is at the top of the list." She related an incident that had happened earlier in the week in which she would not give up her personal power to a customer or to her husband. She was able to convince her husband of her point of view by using "I" statements to convey the reason behind and correctness of her actions.

B1: "I am just so happy to see everyone." She said the group and the information was extremely helpful to her. She was really grateful for the information on menopause and for the sharing and support from all the members of the group. She related an incident that happened last week that convinced her that her communication skills could use some fine-tuning.

K1: "I have really been looking forward to tonight." She said she used the information she learned from the group every day. She shared that she was still having some difficulty keeping her personal power when it comes to the lady at work who frustrated her so much. But she said she was working on trying to let go of the irritation and she was being successful more often than in the past.

The researcher also had the group members complete the written follow-up interview questionnaire. Once the "official" part of the meeting was over everyone ate, talked, and enjoyed the company of the women with whom they had become so close. The evening ended with a tentative date to meet again after the holidays.

The researcher reflected on the evening and the experiences each of the women had shared. Everyone was in a great mood and was genuinely happy to see everyone else. Besides answering questions about what the group meant to them, the group members talked about work, family and Christmas. S1 had asked if the researcher was planning on running another group. She explained that she was willing to once she had completed her research, but that she was not sure whether the community college would be willing to hire her. S1 said she had told several women in her other classes about the group and they were all interested in the group. The researcher felt that everyone was sincere in their kudos of the group and of the importance and relevance of the information they had received. Each woman took from the topics and discussion what she needed. Since she had recognized it as something she wanted or needed, she would continue to use it until it didn't suit her anymore. This is really all a counselor and facilitator can expect. Providing women with information they didn't know existed or providing it in a way that helps them understand something they didn't in the past, was very satisfying for the researcher, especially if in some small way, it also improves their lives. The researcher has come to understand and appreciate that as a facilitator, experiences such as these, provide an opportunity to learn from the participants. It is in the learning that people find out who they are.

Chapter V

Summary, Implications, Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of Chapter V is to interpret the results presented in Chapter IV and to make recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from the study. The statistical results of this study indicate that none of the three instruments analyzed showed a statistically significant improvement in self-efficacy for Experimental Group #1 members. The analysis did show a small improvement in academic and general self-efficacy and a reduction in anxiety symptoms, however these results were not statistically significant. The results of the qualitative data analysis indicated an improvement in self-efficacy for the group members of the #1 Experimental Group.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a personal growth support group on the self-efficacy of a small group of returning female community college students. To accomplish this evaluation, four research questions were developed.

Research Question 1: Did the #1 Experimental Group members show higher levels of self-efficacy at the end of the eight sessions as indicated by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory data?

Research Question 2: Which group experiences were reported to be the most and least beneficial to the returning women students in the #1 Experimental Group?

Research Question 3: Did the pre-test, post-test show any changes in self-efficacy of members in the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group?

Research Question 4: Did the analysis of the data, collected from the instruments used in the study, support the analysis of qualitative data collected from Group #1 members on levels of academic and general self-efficacy?

In answering these questions, the results of this study revealed that members of all three groups improved their self-efficacy from the time of the pre-test to the completion of the post-test. Analysis of the data from the instruments identified in Research Question 1, resulted in a small improvement of mean scores for all three groups. However, none of the instruments indicated results that were statistically significant. This would result in Research Questions 1 and 3 being answered, yes, there was a change in self-efficacy for all three groups with Group #1 showing higher levels of self-efficacy.

Research Question 2 asked which experiences were reported as most and least beneficial to the Group #1 members. Analysis of interviews, questionnaires and researcher observations indicated the women rated three of the topics covered during the group sessions as most beneficial, as well as, the support of the others in the group. The three topics cited were: (1) personal power, (2) communication skills, and (3) goal-setting skills. The least beneficial experiences reported by the women were study skills and the ending of the group.

Research Question 4 asked whether the analysis of data collected from the instruments supported the analysis of the collected qualitative data of academic and general self-efficacy for the #1 Group members. The data analysis did not indicate any results of statistical

significance. However, the mean scores showed improvement of academic and general self-efficacy and a decrease in anxiety levels over the eight weeks. The analysis of the qualitative data collected supported the improvement of self-efficacy of the Group #1 members over the eight weeks the group met. Data collected from the follow-up meeting supported the continued belief, by the group members, in the improved confidence felt in their ability to be successful in academics and life in general.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a personal growth support group on the self-efficacy of a small group of returning female community college students. The analysis of the data collected supports the conclusion that the personal growth support group positively impacted the self-efficacy of the returning women students. This analysis revealed that the women in the #1 Group showed greater improvement on two of the three instruments, over the other two groups. However, the pre-test, post-test data collected from the #2 Experimental Group and the #3 Control Group indicated a general improvement of efficacy for these women as well.

While none of the data analysis results were statistically significant, there was a small improvement in the mean scores of all three groups. A strictly quantitative study would need statistical significance to provide generalizable evidence of improvement. This was not necessary for this study since the main design focus was on the qualitative data. But could the non-significance have meaning as well...with an n as small as the one in this study, it is difficult to infer.

Returning women can experience stress, anxiety and emotional conflicts as they attempt to balance the responsibilities and expectations of the many roles they fill. These conflicts are usually accompanied by a lack of confidence in their academic skills (Bers, 1983). Eight sessions is a very short period of time in which to effect a substantial change in confidence. Participating in a support group for a complete sixteen-week semester would provide more Group-specific meeting time. This additional time may provide additional validation and affirmation from others in the group that may precede their moving toward greater challenges (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). It also allows for more opportunities for group members to have small successes through which confidence may be built. Could this explain the results of Groups #2 and #3 improvements between the pre-test and post-test?

The group setting helps women share and learn about their common experiences (Burden & Gottlieb; Enns; Fedele; Fedele & Harrington; and Hartman as cited in McManus et al.), as well as their own uniqueness (Butler & Wiltram; Fedele; and Fedele & Harrington as cited in McManus et al.). It also helps women become less isolated from each other (Burden & Gottlieb; Hartman; and Walker as cited in McManus et al., 1997) and allows them to openly discuss issues they might be hesitant to share in mixed gender groups (Enns; Fedele & Harrington; Fedele & Miller; and Walker as cited in McManus et al.). Women learn to value and trust other women and by extension, learn to value and trust themselves (Burden & Gottlieb; Butler & Wintram; Fedele & Harrington; and Fedele & Miller as cited in McManus et al.). By valuing and trusting themselves more, these women gain confidence in their ability to be successful at meeting challenges. This study defined general self-efficacy as the

confidence in one's ability to be successful in completing various actions/challenges. The Group #1 women were part of a formal support group during which learning and sharing were part of the process. But a psychology class could also be considered a group during which learning and sharing take place. The sense of accomplishment realized when successfully completing a college class may result in an increase of confidence in one's ability to be successful at greater challenges. This might have been the case for the women in Groups #2 and #3.

The group format used in this study is based on the Adlerian theory of counseling. The variable of self-efficacy thought to improve as a result of this form of counseling, is based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy states that people guide their lives by their beliefs of personal efficacy. Specific self-efficacy expectancies seem to achieve their influence by affecting both willingness to engage in behaviors and to tenaciously hold on to their attempts to master behaviors (Bandura as cited by Lightsey, 1997). People's beliefs in their efficacy can have diverse effects. These beliefs also influence whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, the amount of stress and depression they experience in coping with environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize (Bandura, 1997a). Anxiety symptoms are a result of the stress people are experiencing. A lessening of anxiety symptoms may be a result of increased self-efficacy. Women in all three groups showed a decrease in anxiety symptoms over the course of this study.

Merriam (1998) states that qualitative research is based on the philosophical assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds.

These researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed-how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. The researcher must physically go to the people in order to observe behavior, collect data, and become completely familiar with the phenomenon being studied. This study was conducted with small samples of returning women community college students. The small, non-random samples, may on one hand, cause problems in the generalizability of the study – a basic condition of much qualitative research. Yet a rich, thick description of the situations of a small number of women enables the readers of this study to determine and compare how closely each the their situations matches the research situation, or how typical the individual is compared with others in the same group. In addition it allowed the researcher to better know and understand what the experience was like for the women involved by her direct observation, interaction, and data collection.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be made for further research in this area. The first recommendation concerns which subjects to choose for further study. This design may be more effective for women who have been screened with the resulting scores indicating low self-efficacy beliefs. However, this could also create problems with respect to the regression of mean. The answer might be to maintain a variance of self-efficacy scores while greatly increasing the sample. This would also be beneficial to the generalizability of the study. Maintaining the collection of qualitative data would aid in the understanding of cultures, individuals, and processes.

If further studies use students in regular, scheduled community college classes, it is recommended that the researcher interview the instructors of these classes. A class taught by a counselor may be subjected to counseling techniques that would also be used by the facilitator of the personal growth support group. These techniques may constitute a variable which affects efficacy in the study subjects. Selecting classes in the hard sciences, in addition to social science classes, might also provide a more balanced population to be studied.

It is also recommended that personal growth support groups meet over a longer period of time. This would allow for additional topics to be presented as recommended by group members of this study. The longer group experience would aid in the bonding among members. Meeting for the same length of time as the other groups participating in the study would allow for consistency between groups.

Because there may be delayed effects of the group work, it is recommended that further research follow the subjects of this study for the next two years to determine if their self-efficacy changes during that time. A follow-up study can provide data concerning the subject's current level of efficacy as well as attitudinal and opinion data concerning their perceptions of how and why their efficacy reached its current level. These findings could then suggest if the information and support gained during the personal growth support group have been maintained over time.

While not a focus of this study, retention is a concern of all higher education institutions. The program outlined in this study had a positive impact on the women involved. All group members were looking forward to continuing their community college classes and completing their degrees. As suggested in the previous paragraph, if these students were

contacted in two years they could also be asked if the group experience had any impact on their decision to stay in school and complete their degrees. This would suggestion the program had a positive impact on retention, at least for these group members. If these results were replicated at other locations, group members could be tracked during their time at these schools and the impact on retention determined.

Returning women students are excited and scared about going to college. Excited because they view education as a door opening to new possibilities. Scared because they are unsure if they can be successful due to the negative beliefs they have about themselves and their abilities. The community college needs to provide programs and services to assist this large student population in becoming more confident and successful. More research on this population, and the program of support described in this study, could prove very effective tools in assisting these women in experiencing the confidence and success they deserve.

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APPENDIX A:

ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Assuming you were motivated to do your best, please indicate how much confidence you have that you could do each of the following:

No Confidence At All		Very Little Confidence		Some Confidence		Much Confidence		Complete Confidence	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

{1} Complete your NOVA course(s) requirements with grades of at least 3.0 (B).
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{2} Complete a Certificate or A.A. degree program with grades of at least 3.0 (B).
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{3} Earn a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 (C) after one year of study.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{4} Earn a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 (C) after two years of study.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{5} Gain admission to a 4-year college, if you decide to continue your education.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{6} Complete requirements for a 4-year degree with a grade point average of at least 3.0 (B).
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{7} Excel at NOVA over the semester.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{8} Excel at NOVA over the next two semesters.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{9} Excel at NOVA over the next three semesters.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

{10} Graduate from NOVA.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

This scale is an adaptation of Lent's Self-Efficacy for Broad Academic Milestones Scale (1997).

APPENDIX B:

GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Using the scale below, rate your confidence in your ability to complete the actions indicated in the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

{1} When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{2} One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{3} If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{4} When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{5} I give up on things before completing them.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{6} I avoid facing difficulties.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{7} If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{8} When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{9} When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{10} When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree 1	Slightly Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Not Sure 4	Agree 5	Slightly Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7

{11} When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{12} I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{13} Failure just makes me try harder.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{14} I feel insecure about my ability to do things.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{15} I am a self-reliant person.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{16} I give up early.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

{17} I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX C:

BECK'S ANXIETY INVENTORY

BAI®

NAME _____ **DATE** _____

Below is a list of common symptoms of anxiety. Please carefully read each item in the list. Indicate how much you have been bothered by each symptom during the PAST WEEK, INCLUDING TODAY, by placing an X in the corresponding space in the column next to each symptom.

	NOT AT ALL	MILDLY - it did not bother me much	MODERATELY - it was very unpleasant but I could stand it	SEVERELY - I could barely stand it
1. Numbness or tingling.				
2. Feeling hot.				
3. Wobbliness in legs.				
4. Unable to relax.				
5. Fear of the worst happening.				
6. Dizzy or lightheaded.				
7. Heart pounding or racing.				
8. Unsteady.				
9. Terrified.				
10. Nervous.				
11. Feelings of choking.				
12. Hands trembling.				
13. Shaky.				
14. Fear of losing control.				
15. Difficulty breathing.				
16. Fear of dying.				
17. Scared.				
18. Indigestion or discomfort in abdomen.				
19. Faint.				
20. Face flushed.				
21. Sweating (not due to heat).				

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APPENDIX D:

STUDENT ADAPTATION TO COLLEGE QUESTIONNAIRE (SACQ)

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)

Robert W. Baker, Ph.D. and Bohdan Siryk, M.A.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

ID Number: _____ Sex: ☐ F ☐ M Date of Birth: _____

Current Academic Standing: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

Semester: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ Summer *or* Quarter: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ Summer

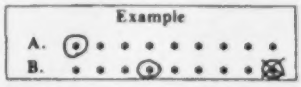
Ethnic Background (optional): ☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ Native American ☐ White ☐ Other

Directions

Please provide the identifying information requested on the right.

The 67 statements on the front and back of this form describe college experiences. Read each one and decide how well it applies to you at the present time (within the past few days). For each statement, circle the asterisk at the point in the continuum that best represents how closely the statement applies to you. Circle only one asterisk for each statement. To change an answer, draw an *X* through the incorrect response and circle the desired response. Be sure to use a hard-tipped pen or pencil and press very firmly. Do not erase.

In the example on the right, Item A applied very closely, and Item B was changed from "doesn't apply at all" to "applies somewhat."



	Applies Very Closely to Me ←	→ Doesn't Apply to Me at All
1. I feel that I fit in well as part of the college environment.	* * * * * * * *	
2. I have been feeling tense or nervous lately.	* * * * * * * *	
3. I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.	* * * * * * * *	
4. I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at college.	* * * * * * * *	
5. I know why I'm in college and what I want out of it.	* * * * * * * *	
6. I am finding academic work at college difficult.	* * * * * * * *	
7. Lately I have been feeling blue and moody a lot.	* * * * * * * *	
8. I am very involved with social activities in college.	* * * * * * * *	
9. I am adjusting well to college.	* * * * * * * *	
10. I have not been functioning well during examinations.	* * * * * * * *	
11. I have felt tired much of the time lately.	* * * * * * * *	
12. Being on my own, taking responsibility for myself, has not been easy.	* * * * * * * *	
13. I am satisfied with the level at which I am performing academically.	* * * * * * * *	
14. I have had informal, personal contacts with college professors.	* * * * * * * *	
15. I am pleased now about my decision to go to college.	* * * * * * * *	
16. I am pleased now about my decision to attend this college in particular.	* * * * * * * *	
17. I'm not working as hard as I should at my course work.	* * * * * * * *	
18. I have several close social ties at college.	* * * * * * * *	
19. My academic goals and purposes are well defined.	* * * * * * * *	
20. I haven't been able to control my emotions very well lately.	* * * * * * * *	
21. I'm not really smart enough for the academic work I am expected to be doing now.	* * * * * * * *	
22. Lonesomeness for home is a source of difficulty for me now.	* * * * * * * *	
23. Getting a college degree is very important to me.	* * * * * * * *	
24. My appetite has been good lately.	* * * * * * * *	
25. I haven't been very efficient in the use of study time lately.	* * * * * * * *	
26. I enjoy living in a college dormitory. (Please omit if you do not live in a dormitory; any university housing should be regarded as a dormitory.)	* * * * * * * *	
27. I enjoy writing papers for courses.	* * * * * * * *	
28. I have been having a lot of headaches lately.	* * * * * * * *	
29. I really haven't had much motivation for studying lately.	* * * * * * * *	
30. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at college.	* * * * * * * *	
31. I've given a lot of thought lately to whether I should ask for help from the Psychological/ Counseling Services Center or from a psychotherapist outside of college.	* * * * * * * *	
32. Lately I have been having doubts regarding the value of a college education.	* * * * * * * *	
33. I am getting along very well with my roommate(s) at college. (Please omit if you do not have a roommate.)	* * * * * * * *	

PLEASE TURN THE FORM OVER NOW AND COMPLETE STATEMENTS 34 THROUGH 67.

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W-228A

	Applies Very Closely to Me ←								Doesn't Apply to Me at All →
34. I wish I were at another college or university.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
35. I've put on (or lost) too much weight recently.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
36. I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
37. I feel that I have enough social skills to get along well in the college setting.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
38. I have been getting angry too easily lately.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
39. Recently I have had trouble concentrating when I try to study.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
40. I haven't been sleeping very well.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
41. I'm not doing well enough academically for the amount of work I put in.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
42. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
43. I am satisfied with the quality or the caliber of courses available at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
44. I am attending classes regularly.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
45. Sometimes my thinking gets muddled up too easily.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
46. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
47. I expect to stay at this college for a bachelor's degree.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
48. I haven't been mixing too well with the opposite sex lately.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
49. I worry a lot about my college expenses.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
50. I am enjoying my academic work at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
51. I have been feeling lonely a lot at college lately.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
52. I am having a lot of trouble getting started on homework assignments.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
53. I feel I have good control over my life situation at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
54. I am satisfied with my program of courses for this semester/quarter.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
55. I have been feeling in good health lately.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
56. I feel I am very different from other students at college in ways that I don't like.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
57. On balance, I would rather be home than here.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
58. Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my course work at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
59. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
60. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether and for good.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
61. I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from college and finishing later.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
62. I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
63. I have some good friends or acquaintances at college with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
64. I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with the stresses imposed upon me in college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
65. I am quite satisfied with my social life at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
66. I'm quite satisfied with my academic situation at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
67. I feel confident that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

APPENDIX E:
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL GROWTH GROUP
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What were your reasons for returning/starting classes at Northern Virginia Community College?

2. What were your reasons for joining the Personal Growth Group?

3. Were the topics covered during the Group sessions of interest and helpful to you? Are there other topics you would have like to have covered? If so, what are they?

4. Have you had support from family and/or friends for your return to college? How has this support or lack of support affected you and your feelings about college?

5. Many women were interested in the idea/concept of this Group but not all of them actually attended. Why did you make the effort to attend?

6. Which part of the Group was most important/beneficial to you personally? (Number most important 1, the next most important 2, and so on).

Session Topics	_____	Support of other members	_____
Course Credit	_____	Resources identified (i.e., books, authors, etc.)	_____
Sharing and Feedback of experiences, emotions, ideas, and thoughts			_____
Data received from the measurements taken each week			_____
Other (please explain)			

7. Would you have attended the Group if you had not received the 1 credit? _____

APPENDIX F:

GROUP REACTION FORM

Group Reaction Form

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. The group experience was enjoyable.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. The members of the group showed support for each other.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. The time allowed for each group session was adequate (1 hr 45 minutes)	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. The number of sessions (8) was adequate.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. The group facilitator was knowledgeable.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. The group facilitator was prepared and organized.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. The topics were relevant to the group purpose.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. The group experience was worth my time.	SA	A	N	D	SD

9. Please describe the best and worst parts of the overall group experience.

10. Please provide any additional comments.

APPENDIX G:

PERSONAL GROUP EVALUATION

Personal Group Evaluation

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. The group experience met my expectations.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. My self-concept has improved as a result of the group.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. The group helped to clarify my educational goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. The group helped to clarify my personal goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. The skills learned in the group are useful to me.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. I will use the skills I learned in many areas of my life in additional to school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7.The group experience improved my confidence in my ability to succeed in the community college.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. The group experience improved my confidence in my ability to succeed in other areas of my life outside of school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. I feel confident in my ability to reach the goals I have set for myself during the group sessions.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. I did not set goals for myself during the group sessions.	SA	A	N	D	SD

11. Please describe the most important thing you learned from the group experience.

12. Please provide any additional comments desired.

APPENDIX H:

SESSION 1

SESSION 1

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of what will happen over next eight weeks

- Agree on group guidelines

- Get acquainted with each other

- Complete scales

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Facilitator will provide an overview of what will be presented and accomplished over the eight sessions of the group.

2. Facilitator will distribute a sheet containing Proposed Group Guidelines. Members will be asked to read the list and make suggestions for additions or deletions. The group will discuss and come to consensus on the final group guidelines.

3. Group members will be paired in dyads. Each member will introduce herself and provide information about herself she wishes to share. This information can include any or all of the following: family, school, work, hobbies, hopes, dreams, why she joined the group.

4. Members will return to the large group and each person will introduce her partner to the group and provide information about her.

5. After everyone has been introduced, the leader will ask the group how comfortable they felt about the activity, first the one-on-one sharing, then the listening of what their partner said about them.

6. The facilitator will link the feelings of the group members to skills identified in the Group Guidelines and to other group members who share similar feelings, as appropriate.

APPENDIX I:

SESSION 2

SESSION 2

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Improving communication skills (McManus, et. al., 1997)

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members are asked what reaction/thoughts they had during the last week concerning the first session.

2. Facilitator presents information on effective communication and assertiveness. Facilitator models "I" statements, active listening, clarifying, and assertiveness skills.

3. Members practice communication and assertiveness skills by role-playing situations presented by the leader. Members are invited to suggest and role-play a situation that is important to them.

4. Members are asked to start a journals in which they write about the communications and interactions with others over the week, seeing if they used these new skills or if they could replay the situation, identify the skills which they could use. Members are also asked to try and practice being assertive in at least one situation.

APPENDIX J:

SESSION 3

Session 3

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Study skills

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members are asked to discuss their use of the communications skills covered during last session.

2. Members are asked to discuss any journal entries that they may wish to share.

3. Facilitator presents information on study skills. Facilitator shares techniques she uses.

4. Members will be asked to share any techniques they use.

5. Members are asked to try and use one/some of the skills, covered during this session, over the next week. Members are reminded about journaling and any of the communication skills, which might be of use to them.

6. Members complete the three measurements.

SESSION 5

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Identify and start to change irrational/negative thoughts/beliefs

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members will discuss their personal goal homework.

2. Facilitator will define and discuss irrational/negative thoughts/beliefs and how they can effect people's lives and self-concept.

3. Members will be asked to share some of their own irrational/negative thoughts/beliefs after the leader has self-disclosed one of her own that she has successfully changed.

4. Leader will model thought-stopping skills and discuss the use of a journal to help track irrational/negative thoughts and how these thoughts were recognized.

5. Members are asked to select an irrational/negative thought they would like to change and work on it during the week, keeping track of their work in their journals.

SESSION 4

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Practice goal-setting

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members are asked to share examples of the communication or study skills we have covered and the feelings that went with using them.

2. Facilitator provides information on goal-setting and the importance of setting goals.

3. Leader distributes success maps (Appendix C) (Given, 1995) and lays out colored pens, pencils, markers, and crayons. Members are asked to think through the goal-setting technique shown on the map and the information provided by the leader, then color in their own success maps, one for an educational goal and one for a personal goal.

4. Members are asked to share their maps and goals with the rest of the group.

5. The leader then explains and leads the group through a guided imagery exercise. First the members are led through a relaxation exercise, then asked to visualize themselves obtaining their goals. Members are asked to visualize what they are doing, what their world looks like, what resources they have available. At the end of the exercise, members are asked to incorporate this image internally (McManus, et. al., 1997). Members are then given the opportunity to share how they felt about the imagery exercise.

6. Leader encourages members to think about their goals and if possible to start the journey indicated on their map using their journals as a starting place.

APPENDIX K:

SESSION 4

APPENDIX L:

SESSION 5

APPENDIX M:

SESSION 6

SESSION 6

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Understanding personal power

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members will discuss their experience working with the irrational thoughts homework.

2. Facilitator asks, "Who has the power to make someone happy"?

3. Members discuss their thoughts about the question.

4. Facilitator provides a definition and information on "personal power".

5. Members work in dyads. Facilitator provides each dyad with a card identifying a situation where one person gives her personal power to another person. The dyad has 10 minutes to determine a way of handling the situation, which allows the person to keep their personal power. The large group reconvenes and the dyads discuss their situations and how they would change them.

6. Members are asked to be aware of any situations during the week in which they have given away their personal power. Members are requested to keep track in their journals of the situation and what they did to keep their power or what they could do to keep it if the situation happens again.

APPENDIX N:

SESSION 7

SESSION 7

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Increase self-care (McManus, et. al., 1997)

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members discuss the homework on personal power.

2. Facilitator provides definition and information on the importance of self-care and the identification of feelings and what information our feelings can provide us.

3. Members are asked what things they do now for themselves to provide self-care. Next the facilitator asks what new things they would like to do for their self-care and how they could make some of these things happen.

4. Facilitator then asks members to think of a situation they have experienced, identify the feeling they associate with that situation, then try to discover information that they could have gained from that feeling.

5. For homework, members are asked to practice self-care, keeping track of the self-care activities they did, the reason they did it, and the feelings they experienced before and afterwards.

APPENDIX O:

SESSION 8

SESSION 8

SESSION OBJECTIVE

- Review of skills learned
- Applying skills in the future
- Reassess self-concept
- Assess goals
- Closure

SESSION PROCEDURES

1. Members are asked to share their self-care activities over the past week.

2. Facilitator provides a summary of the skills learned over the past seven weeks and discusses ways to integrate these skills into members' everyday lives.

3. Members retake the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire.

4. Members assess the goals they have set for themselves. Facilitator provides information, about how the Counseling Center can assist the member in reaching her goals.

5. Members assess the use and helpfulness of journal writing in relation to their self-concepts, goals, and other areas of their lives.

6. Facilitator talks about the closure of the group and asks members to share their feelings about the group, the members, and the closure of the group.

7. Facilitator asks the members to complete two evaluation forms. The first form provides feedback on the overall group, the group format, and the facilitator. The second evaluation asks about changes each member experienced as it relates the her self-concept, the skills learned, if the skills are useful, the goals she has set for herself, her feelings about reaching her goals, and the most important thing she learned in the group.

8. Facilitator tells the group she will be contacting them in three to four weeks to schedule a follow-up to see how they are doing and any continuing impact the Group experience is having on their lives.

APPENDIX P:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME : AGE:

PHONE NUMBERS:

MARRIED CHILDREN WORKING: Full Part-time

Program of study at NOVA

What attracted you to the group?

What would you like to get from the group/goals?

What are your feelings about being in school?

Are you getting support from friends and family on your return to school?

What day and time would be best for you to be able to attend the group?

Would you be willing to actively participate in the group by sharing and helping, while keeping confidentiality?

Have you been in a group before? Have you been in counseling before?

APPENDIX Q:

GROUP NORMS AND RISKS

GROUP NORMS & RISKS

GROUP COUNSELING IS AN INTERPERSONAL PROCESS AND PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGY STRESSING THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BEHAVIORS IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Group norms:

1. Members will attend regularly and be on time
2. Members are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the group
3. Members are encouraged to be personal and share meaningful aspects of themselves, communicating directly with others in the group and, in general, becoming active participants
4. Members are expected to give feedback to one another—let others know how they are being perceived
5. Members should focus on feelings and express them, rather than talking about problems in a detached and intellectual manner
6. Members are encouraged to focus on here-and-now interactions within the group Immediacy refers to being genuine in one's relationships. Members focus on being immediate by expressing and exploring conflicts within the group. Immediacy is called for when there are unverbalized thoughts and feelings about what is happening in a session, particularly if these reactions are having a detrimental effect on the group process.
7. Members are expected to bring into the group personal problems and concerns that they are willing to discuss. They are expected to spend some time before the sessions thinking about the matters they want to work on.
8. Members are encouraged to provide support to each other. This support can include a direct and caring challenge to members to look at some discrepancy between what they are saying and doing.
9. Members are encouraged to listen without thinking of a quick rebuttal and without becoming overly defensive. Members are asked to really hear what others are saying to them and to seriously consider these messages, particularly ones that are repeated consistently.

Possible risks for group members:

Potential life changes may require adjustments
Possible scapegoating
Possible hostile confrontation
Possible group pressure
Possible violation of confidentiality
Unresolved issues raised through self-disclosure

APPENDIX R:

PROPOSED GROUP GUIDELINES

PROPOSED GROUP GUIDELINES

The following are possible guidelines for group norms. Please read each statement. The group will then discuss which guidelines to keep, any that need to be added, or any the group does not want to include.

The members will:

A1. Members may not discuss what goes on in group with anyone outside of group.

A2. Members are expected to come to each session, on time.

A3. Members are expected to actively participate in group and are encouraged to share personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

A4. Members may "pass" on any activity or sharing in which they feel uncomfortable.

A5. Members are expected to give feedback to each other.

A6. Members should focus on feelings and the here and now.

A7. Any member who chooses to leave the group prior to the final eight week session will not be allowed to return to the group.

The facilitator will:

B1. Facilitate group interaction.

B2. Intervene if she determines the member's participation may be harmful to herself or to the group.

B3. Demonstrate and define helpful skills for members to benefit from the group experience, such as: genuineness, active listening, reflecting, clarification, feedback, caring confrontation, supporting, and empathizing.

APPENDIX S:

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

PERSONAL-GROWTH GROUP MEMBER'S STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

This group is being held to examine whether a personal-growth group experience can improve community college returning women students' self-efficacy.

If you agree to participate in the group, you will need to complete two self-efficacy scales and an anxiety scale during each group session. You will be asked to participate in discussion and self-disclosure with other group members and the group facilitator. The group will meet for eight sessions, each one hour and forty-five minutes in length.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the group at any time and for any reason. There is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing. The personal benefits for participating include learning more about yourself. There are no costs to you or any other party.

All data collected in this project will be confidential and kept secured in a locked filing cabinet. The only people who will have access to the identifiable data, in addition to the facilitator, are members of the dissertation committee, each of whom will be asked to keep the data confidential.

Any presentations or publications that address the data will be absent of names. Your name and the name of the college will be coded.

This study is being conducted by C. Darlene VanEvery, doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. She may be reached at 703-256-3445 for questions or complaints. Dr. Gilbert Coleman is the Chair of Ms. VanEvery's dissertation committee and may be reached at 703-993-2311 for questions or comments. You may also contact the George Mason University Sponsored Program Administration Office at 703-993-2295 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This project has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:
I have read this form, comprehend it, and agree to participate in the group.
Yes ( )
No ( )
PRINT NAME _____

SIGNATURE_____

APPENDIX T

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME: _____ **DATE**: _____

1. **How useful were the topics covered during the Group?**
Please use the following to rate usefulness: VERY useful SOMEWHAT useful NOT useful

Communication Skills _____ Study Skills _____

Goal-Setting Techniques _____ Changing Negative Thoughts _____

Personal Power _____ Self-Care _____

2. **How do you plan on using the topics you rated as VERY useful?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. **How would you rate the design/format of the Group?**
Please use the following to rate the Group design: LIKED NEUTRAL DID NOT LIKE

Session Format (Discuss last session, Open sharing, Session topic, Measurement completion)

_____

Number of Group sessions (8) _____

Length of time allowed for Group sessions (1½ hours) _____

Session handouts _____ Amount of time facilitator talked _____

Amount of time available for Group members to talk/share _____

Topics covered during Group sessions _____ Location for Group sessions _____

4. **What impact has this Group experience had: on you, your attitude about college, your personal life, and on your confidence in your ability to be successful in college?**

_____

_____

_____

CURRICULUM VITAE

CURRICULUM VITAE

C. Darlene VanEvery, an American citizen, was born in Grove City, Pennsylvania, on April 10, 1951. She received her B.A. in Management/Health Care in 1979 from Park College, Missouri and her M.A. in Behavioral Science in 1984 from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

From 1975 to 1995, she was on active duty with the United States Air Force. During her twenty year military career, she held several positions in the human resources field, as well as the area of education and training. Her final position before her retirement was as a commander of over two hundred personnel.

While completing her doctorate, Ms. VanEvery worked as an adjunct instructor for Northern Virginia Community College. She taught Introduction to Psychology I during the Spring 1997 semester and Introduction to Psychology II during the Summer 1998 and the Fall 1998 semesters.

From August 1997 to the end of January 1999, she worked as a program development specialist for the George Mason University, Office of Adult Learning and Professional Development. Since February 1999 she has worked in the George Mason University's National Center for Community College Education.

Ms. VanEvery is a member of: the Virginia Community College Association, the American Counseling Association, the Association for Specialists in Group Work, the American College Counseling Association, and the 1998-1999 President of the George Mason University Association of Community College Educators.

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